

勇者様の

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The Master
of the Brave

Illustrated by Y. K. K.

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Illustrated by Y. K. K.

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Yuusha-sama no Oshishou-sama [WN]

The Master of the Brave

Arc1

by Pichi & Meru, Sanoka Nada

[Novel Updates](#)

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Chapter 1: The Boy Who Aspired To Be A Knight

This story started in the Lemmroussell Empire, a large nation in the western regions of the continent of Allfauna. That day, in the Empire's capital city – Simurgh – in the small inn on the main street called Wandering Bird's Roost, a five-year-old boy named Wynn Bard was looking out of the window. This was an ordinary place, one frequented by rowdy customers – adventurers, peddlers, and the like – with a first floor that doubled up as a bar, but the scene outside its window was anything, but and the boy was watching it excitedly.

“Wooooow... So cool!”

He saw silvery-white armour, steel longswords strapped to the waists, steel shields on the backs. The gallant knights, their breastplates etched with a double-headed lion – the coat of arms of the Knight Order – returned to the Imperial Capital triumphantly after a subjugation mission in a monster-overrun forest on the Empire's border. Wynn was but a child, so most of that was beyond his comprehension, but he knew for sure that the shining silhouettes he could spot through the gaps in the crowd lining the main street thickly were really, **really** cool.

“Wynn! Don't you slack off, boy!” shouted Hannah, the proprietress of the inn, interrupting his thoughts. She was glaring at him from over the ledger she was writing in just a moment ago.

“I-I'm sorry,” he said, getting off the sturdy table, solid enough to carry his weight. He returned to his work – cleaning the used cutlery scattered about the place until his cloth turned thoroughly dirty.

“Tch! Useless freeloader,” scoffed the woman. “Go draw some water once you're done with this! Don't you dare slack off, today's gonna be busy!”

Wynn was an orphan. His parents, peddlers by trade, had entrusted their child to their friend, the innkeeper of the Roost, before setting off for the journey that had cost them their lives at the hand of bandits. None of this was unusual in this day and age. His caretakers had been provided with a significant sum of money for their trouble, so they couldn't just throw the boy that had

just lost his family onto the street. He had been allowed to stay.

But he had been made to work for it.

He had been made to work hard. The five-year-old Wynn had never been spoiled since then. The innkeeper's wife, Hannah, a terrible miser, would have him help handle the customers and clean the place. She saw the child as little more than an unnecessary financial burden, an extra mouth to feed, a freeloader incapable of useful work.

Still, this treatment was probably better than ending up on the street. Many child orphans simply died after being left to fend for themselves. Or ended up in the hands of slavers. And while his treatment might resemble that of a slave in other people's eyes, Wynn was nevertheless paid a salary. A sparrow-tear-worth of one, but a salary nonetheless.

"Uhm, Auntie Hannah," the boy prompted timidly while polishing a spoon, "What do I do to become a knight?" Wynn was scared of the woman, but, on this occasion, fear lost to the impression left behind by the gallant figures he had seen outside the window.

"Hmm? A knight?" she repeated absentmindedly scribbling something in the ledger. "You need knowledge, education, martial arts, and magic. And you got to graduate from the Imperial Knight Academy."

"How do you enter that school?"

"You pass an exam, and pay an entrance fee."

"Knight Academy... Hmmm."

Hannah stopped scribbling in the book and looked up. Wynn was smiling, his eyes positively sparkling. This happy smile of a child was a very unusual visitor on the face of this obedient, outwardly unsociable, kid whose days had been spent on working in silence.

She didn't give a damn.

"Keep those hands of yours moving, brat! And go draw water from the well once you're done."

"Ah, I—"

“And stop daydreaming of knighthood. The Knight Academy fees are steep, you may be working here, but you’ll never have the money or the time to learn what’s required. Because. You. Are. Slacking. All. The. Time! Mark my words – if you don’t finish your job by the evening, there’ll be no food today for you mister.”

Drawing the water from a public well to fill the barrel at the back of the inn was a tall task for a five-year-old child. The bucket was heavy and many round trips were required. Wynn finished polishing the last spoon and left through the back door in silence.

The Wandering Roost’s bar served not only alcohol, but also food to its customers. Because of that, the place tended to be heaving in the evenings. Today was no different and Wynn was busy washing plates in a basin on the kitchen floor. But his head was still full of the knights from the morning parade, and as he pondered over how much money would he have to save to enter the school, his hands slipped.

Crash

“Ah...!”

He looked down at the two pieces of a plate on the floor, a completely predictable outcome of a situation in which a distracted five-year-old tries to wash the dishes.

“What are you doing?!” Hannah was, also completely predictably, angry at this. “Make no mistake, that will come out of your wages!”

Her voice made him twitch as he squatted down to collect the broken pieces.

“Wynn? Are you hurt, son?”

The question was asked by the innkeeper, Randall. He had noticed that the boy was, unlike usual, somewhat absentminded tonight and had paid attention to his work since.

He considered the boy to be unselfish, diligent, and smart. He found Hannah’s hostile attitude to Wynn regrettable, but the child had become an orphan and such was the way of the world. A bitter work day after day, even when the child wished to play, was better than ending up on the street. And if he didn’t agree

to have the boy work, his wife would not find it in herself to grudgingly accept his arbitrary decision to take Wynn under their roof on a permanent basis after Wynn's parents died. At times, it pained him to treat his best friend's son this way, but even though the inn prospered, his family finances were strained and didn't leave much room for another mouth to feed.

"You're unlike yourself today. Did something happen?"

"Yes, uncle. I saw knights today! And I want to become one! ...But Aunt Hannah says money is needed, so..."

"A knight, eh?"

Every boy had that, sometimes secret, phase in his life when he dreamed of becoming one. Randall was no exception.

"Does uncle know... how much money is needed?"

"Hmm, it was... four gold coins, I think? —"

Arithmetic was beyond the boy's grasp, but he had a vague idea of what a gold coin was. Right now, he was paid a silver coin a month, one gold coin could be exchanged for a silver of those

"— There was a time when I too wanted to be a knight, you know."

"Uncle as well...?"

"Oh yes. It was so cool after all. I used to pretend I held a sword in my hand all the time."

Learning this snippet about Randall's past made Wynn break into a smile again. That sight, a rare thing since the news of the boy's parents death arrived, made the man unwittingly smile too.

But it wasn't to be. Hannah, peeking at them from the kitchen door, shouted loudly, "What now! Slacking again I see?! You really want to miss dinner that much, kid?" Then she turned to her husband. "And you get a grip too! Customers are waiting! Orders piling up! A disgrace!"

"Coming!"

The man and the boy returned to work, both looking embarrassed.

Later that night, in a small storage shed at the back of the main building, Wynn was laying in his bed, still kept awake by the lingering excitement of what he saw in the morning. His long working day had finally finished just past midnight once he was done cleaning the inn. Usually, he would fall asleep, exhausted by the daily chores, with no strength left to fear being alone in the darkness of his new home since three months past. But not today. Today, as he lay among the crude sheets and blankets in a rickety shed converted to a bedroom, he was thinking of the future.

Knolege, educayshon... Don't know what's that, but I should train. Uncle said it's good to train your body.

His resolve solidified and he suddenly recalled the adventurers that sometimes lodged at the inn. In the mornings, they would run around the courtyard with weights on, or repeatedly swing their swords.

I'll work hard too, he thought, but in the end, the excitement couldn't keep the exhaustion at bay forever. Tomorrow...

Overwhelmed by drowsiness, Wynn fell asleep.

From that day on, every morning, Wynn would wake up before the sun rose, before even the inn's pet rooster crowed. He would run around the neighbourhood. He would treat drawing water as muscle training and the heavy bucket as weights. On the first day, Randall and Hannah were surprised to wake up and see the water barrel filled already, but they soon stopped to care about this. It inconvenienced them in no way and the boy now had time to do other jobs too. His workload increased. His pay did not. He did not complain, though, in every new task he found a new way to train. Take peeling potatoes and carrots as an example – perfect opportunity to learn how to use a kitchen knife and a dagger. In such a way, days, and then months, passed.

Things changed when Wynn was eight years old.

By this point, his agility was clearly superior to other children his age. He couldn't know this, of course, because he had nobody to compare himself to. Over the last three years his daily quota of work grew steadily – unlike his pay that remained flat – and he had no time to play. Those scant moments not

taken by Hannah's demands were spent training. Thus, he had no playmates of his age, and he didn't even have many chances to meet Randall's two sons, aged nine and eleven, who had always been spoiled by their mother.

He would wake up early, run to finish drawing water from the well – with two bucket at a time now, he could manage the weight – and then swing a wooden sword until his caretakers woke up. The time it would take him to fill the barrel was half of what he had needed when he was five, well below what a person with common sense would expect from a child his age.

His swings weren't all that bad either. Roughly a year ago, an adventurer, that had booked into The Wandering Bird's Roost for a month, had woken up to a surprising sight of a boy training his body at an even earlier hour than the adventurer himself. They had exchanged words, When they exchanged words, the adventurer learned of Wynn's dream of becoming a knight. Moved, the adventurer not only had gifted Wynn with a practice blade, but also demonstrated how to use it. A whole month of such tutelage was a godsend Wynn had never even hoped for.

Once Hanna woke up, he would be assigned his morning chores – cleaning mostly. He would invariably finish that by the time the sun rose fully, gaining a modicum of free time. Free time he always spent on swinging the sword some more.

One of those days, Wynn suddenly felt someone's gaze on his back during one of those practice sessions. He looked behind him, and saw a small girl watching him from behind a neighboring building. She wore a lovely set of white clothes made from high-class cloth, but what was more striking was her eyes, shining with unabashed curiosity. He could almost read the girl's thoughts

What is that boy there doing? Is it any fun?

As soon as he stopped swinging his sword and looked at her, the girl ran out from her shadowy corner and approached him.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Training."

"Is that interesting?"

“Dunno. I enjoy it.”

“May Leti try?”

From this question, Wynn figured that Leti must have been the girl’s name. He watched her pick up a stick, stand next to him, and start to mimic his swings. He didn’t mind, since she wasn’t a particular bother either, so he resumed his practice. At the end she asked what time he would begin tomorrow so that she could join him from the start.

The following day, she was there when he came out to train, and she insisted to help him carry the buckets of water. He, as usual, carried two of those in his hand. Looking behind him, he could see the girl struggling, as she followed him unsteadily with one.

“Big Brother... it’s heavy,” she said, seeing him watch her.

“It’s okay, you can just leave it here. I’ll come back for it later.”

She shook her head, continuing to walk slowly with face bright-red from exertion.

“...Leti will do her best.”

From that day onwards, the little girl would come by every day and swing her stick at his side. Every time, she wore different clothes, all of them high-class. It was clear she was a child of a wealthy family. Judging by her dirty knees, she was also most likely sneaking out of her home to join him. Wynn occasionally wondered whether her family was worried about her disappearances. He was also convinced she wouldn’t last long. There was no real pleasure to be had from training, he was able to persevere because he had a clear goal and wasn’t bothered by the feeling of fatigue after the practice sessions. Any normal child would have given up long ago. In fact, the innkeeper’s sons had actually tried to emulate him once and had snatched the sword from him. On the second day, bored, they had tossed the blade away and had gone back to their usual games. He was sure the girl calling herself Leti would too eventually stop coming, leaving him to train alone. She was two years younger than him, and this was his first experience of playing with kids his age. That thought made him feel a little lonely.

To Wynn's great surprise, half a year had passed, and Leti was still coming. And she had even somehow procured a wooden sword appropriate for her size. She would show up whenever it was time for his warm-up exercises. They would do those, and then go for a run. Initially, they would do few circles around the neighborhood of the inn, just like Wynn had been doing aged five when he had started to train regularly, since he would ease off the pace to allow Leti to keep up. But after several months, that was no longer necessary, the girl was able to match his pace without any trouble.

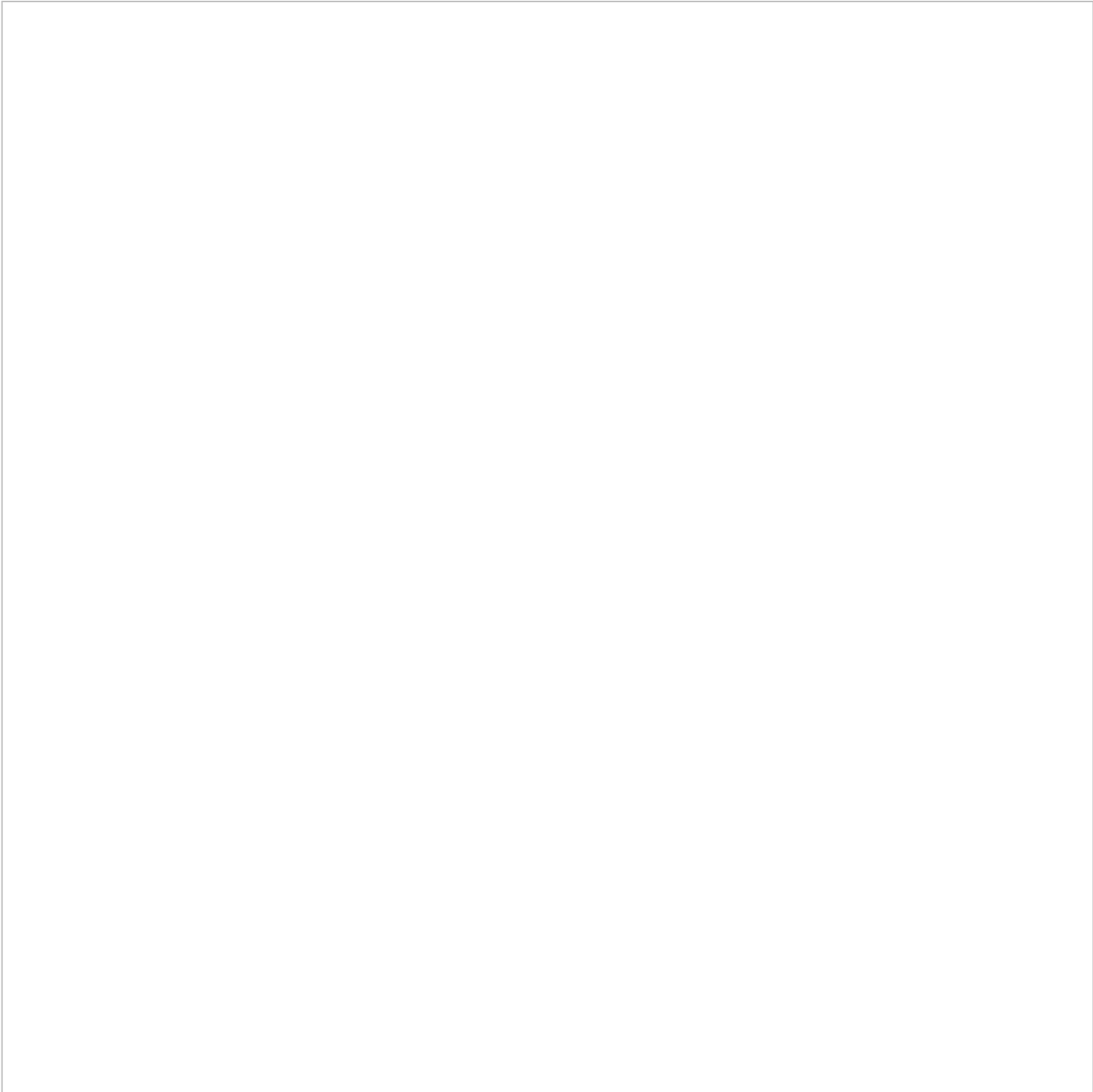
Anybody else would find that odd. At the age of eight, Wynn's physical capabilities well surpassed those of his peers. For a barely six-year-old girl to match him? That would make her a prodigy. But the boy lacked proper comparison, so it didn't strike him as particularly odd. He was happy she caught up to him, and he considered that to be a natural outcome of the exercise.

Once the had been done running, they would take out their swords and start trading blows. This had been something they learned by imitating the sparring adventurers. Wynn had restricted himself to blocking her strikes at first, but, as time passed, Wynn started to also go on the offense. Recently, their blades started to move quite rapidly, well beyond capability of a normal child, and the sounds of impacts turned into an uninterrupted staccato. This did not go unnoticed by the usual assortment of adventurers, but none of them said a thing, their wounded pride not allowing them to admit they might have been surpassed by a couple of kids.

First time they had woken Hannah up with the noise, she had shouted at them, certain the boy had been loafing around. But then she had noticed that the morning tasks had all been done, and the girl had not only looked lovely, but had also been dressed in high quality clothes. She had been sure the unexpected guest had been a noble daughter of some sort, one that would surely grow into a beautiful woman, and she had selfishly decided to have her sons keep close to her. Mark and Abel did indeed pay unusual amount of attention to the girl, but she didn't really want to talk to them and kept sticking to Wynn for some reason, even helping him work. This made it hard for the brothers, who tended to play around more often than not, to befriend Leti.

And so it was today. The brothers, together with a group of local children, called out to Leti inviting her to play with them. She refused saying she was going to read a book with her Big Brother instead, and then, restlessly, she ran to Wynn holding said book behind her back. It had been taken away from her before, but she had been fast enough to successfully chase down the offending boys, with tears in her eyes.

Leti would come around twice a day, these days, before noon and once again before the sunset. Wynn’s work was usually done by the lunchtime and he was free to spend time with her. The two of them would sit down somewhere to read attentively.



(Illustration by Mitemin) (Editor: This is pretty, but horribly mismatched to the actual story.

In the chapter they read in Wynn's room / shed >.>)

Hannah had, at first, seen this new routine as a nuisance, but eventually stopped objecting, and Leti ended up brazenly staying in his room in the shed when it was time to read. She had just started taking reading and writing lessons from a private tutor employed by her family, however, for some reason, the lessons seemed to be in alien language until she got to work through them together with Wynn. The boy, on the other hand, had never gone to school. His caretakers taught him enough letters and numbers to allow him to work on the inn's ledger, but nothing beyond this. Therefore, when it came to reading books Leti brought over, they had to do it together. Wynn warmly welcomed those afternoon visits. Having no acquaintances among his peers, he had grown to see the girl as his best, and only, friend.

Now, they were in Wynn's room, as usual, sitting next to each other on a pair of chairs. She would usually bring a tome about history or mythos of the world. Sometimes it would be something more valuable, like a magic grimoire. Today's book described the world they lived in.

"The land we live our lives on is called the Continent of Allfauna."

"Its northern part is denied to humans. That land swarms with monsters and demons under the hegemony of the Demon King... Big Brother, what is a Demon King?"

"The strongest of all the monsters, the number one demon."

"Is he stronger than Big Brother?"

"Isn't that a given?"

"Even stronger than a knight-person?"

"Ah... No way! Knights are definitely stronger!"

Wynn yearned to be a knight. For him, their strength was absolute and something to aspire to.

"Big Brother, if the knights are stronger, why won't they smite the Demon King?"

"Come to think of it... Hmm..."

“Hmm?”

The two of them might be reading serious books, but they were still a pair of naive children. In reality, not only the Demon King but even a single high ranking demon would easily crush any given knight order.

One day, Leti again brought over a grimoire and the two of them were practicing magic it contained.

“O fire, bend to my will: Light up!”

A small flame, the size you’d see on a candle, alighted on Wynn’s fingertip.

“Big Brother, you did it! Leti will do it too!”

“Concentrate on your fingertip deeply. Concentrate, Leti. Concentrate.”

The girl stared at her fingertip motionlessly under Wynn’s watchful gaze—

“O fire, bend to my will: Light up!”

—and with a *fwoosh* a roaring pillar of flame formed there reaching for the sky.

“Wow!” she exclaimed, before fully realizing what had happened. In full panic, she started to wave her hands to put out the fire and then knelt in front of Wynn, who ended up on his bottom out of shock.

“Big Brother, Big Brother! are you okay?!”

Wynn was fine, even if his bangs were now shorter after getting singed by the flames.

“Ah, that was surprising! You have much stronger magic power than I do. Leti will surely become an amazing magician!”

Seeing a much bigger talent reveal itself before him, the boy did not react with jealousy. He felt shyness and admiration.

“But magicians must study hard, right? Leti hates studying...”

“You are already able to read so many difficult words. I think Leti is clever, you know?”

“But, but! When I study with the tutor, he always gets mad—”

Seeing her drop her head, dejected, Wynn patted and stroked her hair.

“—but when I read the books together with Big Brother, I understand everything very well.”

“In that case, let’s read together again.”

“Okay!” said the girl, nodding cheerfully. And in such a manner, the two of them continued to spend their days training and studying together. Though for Leti the training was more of a playtime.

The time went on in this manner for another four years. Wynn was now 12, Leti had just turned 10. The day everything changed started as usual, it was before sunrise and he was waiting for her to arrive. And arrive she did, running and in tears. Before he understood what was going on she was hugging him tightly and sobbing into his chest. Being embraced by a similar-aged member of the opposite sex was a novel feeling for the boy. But, since he had treated the girl like a younger sister, it was not an entirely pleasurable one. He trembled slightly, but Leti was in no state to pay him any kind of close attention.

“Uu... Big Brother,” she managed to stammer in between the tears.

“W-what happened, Leti?”

“What if... What if I suddenly... leave far away?”

Still slightly stunned by the girl’s fragrance and the completely unexpected softness, Wynn finally managed to extricate himself from Leti’s embrace, and looked into her eyes.

“Far? Fow far? Klenad?”

Klenad was the city nearest to Simurg. Nevertheless, for Wynn, that was pretty far.

“Even... Even farther...”

“Really... How long will you be away?”

“I... don’t... know...” she answered, bursting into tears and hugging him again.

Wynn patted her head gently waiting patiently for her tears to subside.

“We won’t be able to train together again, Big Brother. Leti is sorry.”

“Don’t cry. It was going to happen one day. I almost saved enough money for the Knight Academy’s enrollment fee. Once I went to school, training together wouldn’t be possible, you know.”

“I know... but...” she paused, then her face brightened up and she added, “Big Brother, I’ll do my best to return as quickly as I can!”

It wasn’t hard to figure out that Leti was a daughter of a high-ranked house, and Wynn had guessed that too. He couldn’t really understand why would that family let their daughter slip out all the time for all those years, but he expected the girl’s fate to be the same as that of others of her kind – an early political marriage. He thought that this must have been what this whole affair was about, she was about to marry someone in a foreign country. So her saying she would be back as quickly as possible suggested a divorce. And that would be a very bad thing, for her and her family. So he attempted to dissuade her from that train of thought.

“You know, Leti, returning very quickly... That might not be so good.”

“Not... good?”

She looked to be on the verge of tears again, so he capitulated instantly.

“Ah... I would be very happy though.”

“Then, I will! Soon!”

She locked her hand into a fist firing herself up.

“Alright, alright. Shall we immediately have a match today, after the warm-up?”

“Okay!”

This was different from their usual training schedule, but Leti looked to be more fired up than usual. Appreciating the effort this had taken her, and suspecting she might be stressed by being forced to go somewhere she didn’t want to, Wynn decided to accompany her in a spar to take her mind off the future. During the ensuing bout, her sword reached speeds unlike anything she

had been capable of before. He was defending patiently, and waiting for a chance to counter, but it never came. In the end, he fell for one of her feints, and, for the first time ever, Leti bested Wynn.

She didn't come the next day.

Or the following one.

Or the one after that.

That fateful day truly had been the last day before her departure and Wynn would be training alone for the first time in years. He didn't cry though. She had set off on her path, and he had one of his own to follow. He, as always, dreamed to be a knight. That demanded a bit more money and a lot more power, so he threw himself into training again, tormenting his body to temper it further and distract his mind from newly discovered loneliness.

Chapter 2: Leticia von Mavis, the Brave

In the grand audience room, at the heart of the Imperial Palace, the eleventh Emperor of Lemmrousell was sitting on his throne with the entire court present. To his right, he was flanked by a neat line of the Imperial Guard's knights. On his left stood a gaggle of councilmen and government ministers. All of those people were watching a party of four as they walked along the red carpet approaching the throne.

And what a party it was. There was the woman who bore a title of the Great Sage – Tiara Sciurus Velf, an elven princess. To her right walked an acknowledged Sword Saint – Raul Holt Leon, a prince of the Leonese Kingdom. To her left walked Lorah Sein – the Chosen of Anastasia, Goddess of Dawn and Creator of All That Was.

That illustrious trio was preceded by a young woman with hair so golden that it seemed to attract light, and eyes so green that emeralds paled in comparison. She was so brilliant, that even her companions, enchanting in their own right, paled next to her. However, that was not because she was more beautiful than them, but because her imposing presence commanded the attention of the whole room.

Soon, the party arrived in front of the throne, and the trio in the back all kneeled. But the girl did not, impassively facing the Emperor. Yet, not a hint of complaint, criticism, or outrage could be heard anywhere, for the young woman was the “Divine Sword Princess”, the Brave blessed by the Dawn Goddess herself. That title carried prestige equal to that of His Imperial Majesty. Leticia von Mavis didn't have to kneel in front of anybody anymore.

Her aura of majesty was apparent and matched the one exuded by the man on the throne. Her power, which allowed her to single-handedly slay the Demon Lord and push back his army, was unrivaled. Everybody here wanted something from her. Frankly, everybody wanted her.

“We bid you welcome, Brave,” spoke the Emperor, “and we salute your triumph. You have justly earned any and all reward you would deign to desire.

Our son can be married to you if you so wish. You can become the Empress.”

All the ministers nodded in agreement to those words. She was a von Mavis, and as a daughter of a duke, her political influence was not small, even though she was the youngest of his children. She would only gain by marrying with the royal family, and combined with the impact of her title, her standing would be unprecedented, both at home and abroad. If you included her combat power and the reverence from all the common folk across the continent... Obtaining her allegiance became a matter of the highest priority for the Empire.

A marriage to the Crown Prince was a perfectly acceptable solution to that problem. She was fourteen, Prince Alfred was twenty-three, the age difference was noticeable, but not unusual when it came to unions between nobles. She had the prestige, the ancestry, the looks. There would be no objections.

But, despite all that she stood to gain—

“I am deeply grateful, Your Imperial Grace, both for the welcome and for your generous offer. Nevertheless, I must refuse.”

—she declined the advances. Nobody could refuse the Emperor and live, but she was the Brave blessed by the Goddess. Even he couldn’t bend her to his will.

“Daughter dearest,” asked a man in his prime that stood among the ministers of the Crown, “does the idea of wedding His Highness Alfred displease you in some way?”

He was Duke Mavis, Leticia’s father and the Prime Minister of the Empire.

“I have just returned from the battlefield, Father. I have not yet the mind to consider such matters.”

“But-”

“Let it be, Mavis,” the Emperor interrupted the rebuttal before it even started. “It is our fault for thoughtlessly raising the matter so soon. We understand, Brave, and we invite you to stay in our palace for a while. Until you shed the weariness of your journey, at least.”

But she shook her head again.

“Once more, I must refuse you, Your Imperial Grace. I must bring the news of my victory to my Master at once.”

“Oh?” the Emperor leaned forward, intrigued, “your Master? Master of Leticia von Mavis, the Brave?”

Her magical prowess and swordsmanship gave her power far surpassing any other human. Gaining services of the man who taught her would bring the Empire outrageous benefits. No wonder the Emperor was intrigued.

And as the monarch leaned forward, a man standing next to Leticia’s father proudly struck out his chest. This man was the private tutor of House von Mavis, who had managed to obtain a place at the audience when he had heard his former student had been about to return. It hadn’t been much of an achievement, truth be told, he held the rank of a baron, and a title was a title. Even if meager.

He was strongly convinced that, as the teacher of the Brave, he was deserving of a reward, and expected to be introduced any moment now. His mind started imagining the imminent future, and he smiled at his thoughts.

Surely, Leticia will introduce me as her master now, he mused, True, when I first taught her, I had thought her a girl foolish beyond belief. But, thanks to my patience and hard work, she grasped both magic and fencing. I still remember the painstaking battle with the Duchess when the brat asked for a wooden sword. It has paid off, though. All the frustration, all my diligence, it finally bore fruit!

There had been many frustrations in his life back then, and he had made sure to carefully vent them on her during their fencing practice. He had been careful to not leave any visible injuries, of course, and now that he thought about it...

Clearly, my strictness had caused the Brave to awaken in her. Though the small details might probably be worth glossing over. After all, her standing there is the end product and the proof of my benevolence! Yes, yes indeed!

His imagination started to paint a vivid picture of her walking towards him and presenting him to the Emperor, and he got lost in the daydream.

“Yes, Your Imperial Grace, it is this gentleman here, in fact,” he imagined

her say.

“Oh? It is him?” replied the imaginary Emperor.

“Indeed. He had taught me ever since I was little. He was a strict but just teacher.”

“We see. So he is the secret behind your strength...”

“That is so, Your Imperial Grace. Master taught me all I know about the sword and magic. I respect him deeply.”

“If Mavis the Brave speaks so highly of this person, then, truly, he must be an exceptional individual. What is your name, good sir?”

He imagined raising his head, and, being permitted to speak, starting to introduce himself.

In the meantime, in the real world, the conversation between the Emperor and the Brave continued.

“Can we not change your mind, Brave? Must you really see your Master immediately?”

“Emperor’s kindness is truly boundless, and I am humbled by it. Nevertheless...”

“We see... Interesting. We would very much like to meet this man, this Master of the Brave.”

The tutor felt a growing urge to step out and present himself there and then, but before he could succumb to that, Duke Mavis spoke once more.

“Daughter, there is no need to go anywhere, your Master is here with me.”

The tutor’s heart fluttered with anticipation, and he stepped forward. He saw his vision becoming flesh before his eyes. Now, Leticia would smile at him and—
—nothing happened. There was no recognition in her face as she looked in his direction.

“Do you not recognize him? He was your tutor when you were a child.”

“It... Ah... has been a long time, milady, has it not?” said the tutor as a

greeting. But all he received in reply was a most perfunctory of nods before the Brave turned away from him. The man was stunned. And her father asked in slight confusion, “Is this gentleman not the Master you spoke of? Did you apprentice yourself to somebody during your travels, perhaps?”

“I have encountered no such person,” interjected the Elven Princess. “I have accompanied Leticia from the very beginning and seen no being of such strength along the way.”

“Where is this master then?” asked the duke, increasingly confused, “And who may he be?”

At this point, everybody was intrigued by the mysterious Master’s real identity. But Leticia herself just smiled, and that radiant smile captivated everyone who saw it. Not even Tiara, despite traveling with the Brave from the very beginning, had ever seen such a smile on the girl’s face before today.

“My Master lives here, in the Imperial Capital.”

This raised an uproar among the attending nobles. Exclamations of “What?!” and “Such a person, here?! In Simurgh?!” could be heard all over. The Emperor struggled to hear her final words over the ruckus.

“And, for that reason, I cannot remain in the palace, Your Imperial Grace. I shall return to my Master’s, to Wynn Bard’s side. Thank you for this gracious welcome, and may you fare well.”

On this day, the legend of the Brave would be born to be passed down from generation to generation, one in which Wynn Bard was named as her master. His name would spread throughout the continent on the lips of ambassadors who attended the conference. Forever on, he would be known as the Master of the Brave.

Chapter 3: After the audience

The audience with the Emperor reached an end, and the group retired to one of the Palace's many guest rooms.

"Ahh..." sighed Leticia while sitting sprawled listlessly all over a chair, "Sooo tired!"

"You did work hard today," replied Lorah, handing her a cup of tea. The palace servant who usually handled this was not present, he had been dismissed so that the private resting time of the Brave's party would be undisturbed. "Nevertheless, it's not often that one sees a stamina fiend like you this tired. Being in His Imperial Majesty's presence must have been stressful, no?"

Leti nodded in response, "Honestly... I just don't do that sort of atmosphere."

"Besides, they made me wear so many clothes!" she grumbled, "I'm the Brave, I should be allowed to just go in my normal attire, you know?"

This made Lorah chuckle. "That isn't really... You are a daughter of a duke, no? Should you not be used to these kinds of occasions?"

"I was ten when the Goddess sent the oracle announcing me as the Brave. Before that day, I had never been expected, or required, to do anything of the sort."

In fact, young Leticia was considered to be such a problem child that even her tutor dared to hint to the ducal couple that she might be an idiot. She would slip out of the house all the time, both in the mornings and later in the day. Whenever the residents of the mansion would wake up from their sleep, they would discover she had already gone somewhere. Her father had actually seriously considered putting her under house arrest for a while, one masked from the wider society with claims of serious illness and recuperation away from capital. Ultimately, the idea was rejected because it would've been a waste of her uncommonly striking appearance. She was left in the hands of the tutor, but denied a debut in high society.

That continued until her tenth birthday when the clergy in each country on all continents received an oracle: “The Brave walks the earth. Her name is Leticia von Mavis.”

That day, her life changed upside down. The family that had treated her like a black sheep in the past suddenly put her on a pedestal. When she wanted money, she would get whatever amount she asked for. When she needed an item, the best craftsmen would be tasked with making one by the end of the day. Her father personally invited famous martial artists and magicians, including the Great Sage, to visit the estate, hoping they would join Leticia on her quest.

She had never been so pampered in her life, neither had she seen her family meddle so much before.

This sudden turn of favor made her wary. She refrained from indulging in the overt generosity, partly because spending time with Wynn strongly influenced her sense of value. She also continued to visit the boy daily over the half a year she had remaining before it was time to set off.

“Haah,” she sighed wistfully, “I really, really want to leave already and go back to see Big Brother...”

“The esteemed brother in question must be His Excellency Lars, the scion of von Mavis family, no?” asked the priestess, reaching her hand out to slowly stroke the soft hair on Leticia’s head. The young woman let herself be caressed, not changing her position on the chair. Her present company were the only people in front of whom she would ever admit to exhaustion. The fact that they would indulge her in those moments wasn’t entirely unrelated.

“Come to think of it, you did keep remarking that you wished to return to your Big Brother’s side all throughout the journey. He must have a special place in your heart.”

The group had actually stopped at the Mavis estate before they had left for the Imperial Palace. But contrary to the other three’s expectations, Leticia had adopted her dignified manner of the Brave while there, and not once had she tried to find her elder brother. She had actually decided to return to the inn almost immediately. None of her three companions could possibly expect that

Big Brother was not related by blood to her, and that she didn't consider her blood relatives to be family at all.

"Honestly, you should have stayed to meet him when we stopped by the Mavis family estate."

"Lorah, Big Brother and older brother are two different people, you know?"

"House Mavis has four children only, does it not? That being you, Viscount Lars, and your two elder sisters?" There was a noticeable amount of confusion in the priestess' voice.

"No, no, no! Big Brother is my Master, you know?"

"Wait just a moment now!" interrupted Raul. "Are you saying your Master is young enough to be called 'Big Brother'?"

"Obviously? He's two years older than me, you know? Ahh, I wanna see him soon!"

Until this point, the other three imagined Leticia's master as a sharp military man with a wealth of life experience. Hearing that he was the 'Big Brother' forced them to sharply re-estimate the probable age, to about mid twenties. But this... This made him a teenager! It was a huge shock.

"Leti, could this 'Big Brother' of yours possibly be stronger than you?"

"I have managed to defeat him only once – on the day of my departure."

"Leti was stronger than me already when I came to accompany her on her journey," supplemented Tiara.

"Huh?" Raul stood up and faced the elf. "Say what?! She was only ten years old when you met, and she was already stronger than you?"

As was the case with every elf, Tiara's looks were deceptive. She had the appearance of a teenager, even though she was actually over 150 years old.

"Just so. Not only in magic, but in swordsmanship as well. It really brought home just what a Brave is. The moniker 'Divine Sword Princess' did not come from nothing."

"Wow."

The three of them turned back to Leticia, still slumping in the chair. They had witnessed her absurd strength during their quest. It was quite likely she could take on all three of them at once and still win.

“Your Master cannot possibly be stronger than you are now, right?”

“I’m stronger than Big Brother, for sure.”

“Thought so. To be honest, I would like to spar with him once... Who do you think would win?”

“In a practice spar? You, most likely.” Leticia finally rose from the chair and walked to the window. “But...” she said wistfully as she looked at the world outside, “In a life-and-death struggle, you may very well lose.”

The young Brave fixed her clothes, a warm smile blooming brightly on her face.

Chapter 4: A Boy Who Aspired To Knighthood

A pharmacy in Simurgh, three years before the Brave's triumphant return

"Thank you, Wynn," said the female apothecary who owned the shop, having received the herbs and mushrooms the boy had gathered. "Here's your payment."

"Thank you very much, Auntie."

"You're alone again? What happened to that girl that used to come with you?"

"Uhm, well... She had to leave the city. Family circumstances."

"I see. A pity, you two were like two peas in a pod. You must be lonely."

He did feel pangs of loneliness. In the month that had passed since their final sparring match, every one of his chores, instead of being a boring routine, reminded him of Leti. She had always stuck close to him, regardless of what he had been doing. Peeling potatoes, reading books together during his breaks, they would do that together even when Mark and Abel, the innkeepers' children, had invited her to play with them. To be honest, he had often thought she should just go and play with them, but everytime he had brought it up, she would start crying or throw a tantrum. She was his dear friend, and she had wanted to be with him and him alone.

He wondered if she was able to get used to the life in the new place and worried about whether she could get along with the family she married into. Because yes, he still thought Leti had been married off to a distant noble. He hadn't had the free time to attend the parade celebrating the Brave's departure from the capital. He wasn't rich, he couldn't afford the newspapers with illustrations depicting that event. He had heard merchants and adventurers gossiping at the inn about the whole thing, but even in his wildest dreams, he wouldn't expect that Leti was the Brave that had gone on a journey to defeat the Demon Lord. There was no way for him to learn the truth.

He just knew that they would probably never meet again. She had stressed

that she would **do her best** and come back as soon as she could, whatever ‘doing her best’ had meant in this context. She was a hard-working girl though, so he didn’t doubt she would.

All he could do was continue his life of solitary training.

“It’s fine, Auntie. But thank you for your concern. Looking forward to the next time!”

“Thank you for your work. Do come again!”

I can’t lose to my dear friend! he thought, firing himself up. Then, slinging the bag over his shoulder, he left the pharmacy.

For a year now, Wynn would complete requests from the Adventurer’s Guild while on his morning jogs. They would be simple tasks, like gathering some herbs or delivering letters to different parts of the city, and there was never a shortage of them because there were only two official postmen to deliver correspondence within Simurgh, making it more efficient for merchants and nobles to hire the Guild to handle mail. The remuneration for those jobs, and an occasional tip received from a pretentious noble with a penchant for flaunting his wealth, allowed him to save up enough money for his goal.

He wasn’t alone in roaming the streets that early in the morning to slip letters underneath doors or into the hands of a sleepy doorman. There was no shortage of beginner adventurers who couldn’t cope with monsters yet and had to limit themselves to easy jobs, like gathering mushrooms on the outskirts of the forest. Thanks to this, the Guild’s delivery service would be prompt and cheap.

“Wynn! Stop swinging that stick, boy, and go to the market to buy ingredients!”

“Yes, Aunt Hannah.”

Wynn’s workload increased again after Leti had left. His aunt, finally not having to be mindful of offending a noble family, was glad she could give him more work. And she had done so without restraint. Before, he and the girl would have time to practice with his wooden sword after he finished drawing

water. Now, Hannah made him go to the market during that time to restock the inn's supplies. He was happy to do that extra task, though, for the task of shopping to have been left to him meant that Hannah finally recognized him as a full-fledged adult.

Thus today, he again ran to the market with the shopping list in one hand. Even though the sun had not yet risen, the place was already busy. There were other children like him also running errands, merchants dressed for long travel and farmers from nearby villages selling their produce and handicraft. The customers at this time of day would be mostly employees of other businesses that sought to restock before the opening hour. The normal citizens, adventurers, and travelers would show up later, once the sun was up.

Wynn slowed down since it was hard to keep running in such a crowd, and set his footsteps in the direction of the stores Wandering Bird's Roost usually bought their supplies from. But half-way in, he suddenly stopped. There was a stall selling meat skewers to the customers, its wares sizzling over the hot coals and spreading enticing aroma all around. Many people had been drawn in by the smell, some already drinking beer and wine in spite of the early hour, and his eyes too became glued to the juicy meat.

Wynn's mouth watered instantly.

He hadn't had his breakfast yet, and he had just recently finished running buckets of water from the neighborhood's well, a task demanding enough to make even adults complain. He was a growing, healthy boy. His stomach grumbled. His feet started to unsteadily stagger towards the aroma and—

I'll do my best and come back as soon as I can! Leti's voice suddenly rang in his head. She was out there, working hard, all alone in an unfamiliar place. And he? Here he was, an aspiring knight with almost enough money saved for the Academy, almost giving in to temptation. How could he? With the help of this newly found determination, he turned his head away, tearing his eyes off the juicy meat. This was the first battle in an ongoing struggle that would repeat itself every morning from now on.

Later that day, while washing carrots and potatoes, Wynn suddenly asked himself a question – *Will I really become a knight?*

It was a concern he didn't spend that much time dwelling on, but one that started gnawing on his mind recently. He knew that, even though the Academy opened its doors to anyone that could afford the fee and pass the exam, an overwhelming majority of its students would be children of nobles, landowners, and rich merchants. He was no longer a starry-eyed five-year-old with a dream. Now, aged twelve, he was well aware that this dream was reaching above his station.

Observing the innkeepers' children didn't help. Mark, now fifteen, had begun to apprentice under his parents, learning how to cook and manage the account books, preparing himself for the day when he would take over the family business. He was now proactively helping with his father's work and no longer played around like before.

Then, there was the thirteen-year-old Abel who, despite being sent to work in a number of companies Randall had connections with, would often run away to return home. Today, the younger of the two brothers had done it again, and announced loudly, "I wanna become an adventurer!"

This naive declaration caused a vein to pop out on Randall's forehead, and was welcomed with a fatherly fist to the boy's ear.

"Do you now... I understand, Abel, this small town and inn are just not good enough for you, right?"

Hannah, still prone to spoiling her children, as usual jumped to the defense of her bawling son, but for once, her husband didn't stop.

"You are being a naive fool, boy!"

Wynn could hear the shouts clearly as he was cleaning in the kitchen, and those words pierced his heart.

He was just like Abel, chasing a dream beyond his means. Would it really be fine even if he saved enough money? Wouldn't he be just wasting his time attending the Academy when becoming a knight was just a pipe dream? He had no parents to support him. His only friend left for somewhere far away. There was nobody to turn to for advice. He only had the weight of hard work expended to pursue his goal, weighed in money he had saved over the last year, to push him to keep working hard. Both at his job at the inn and in his own

training.

In the end, he just couldn't let himself lose to Leti who was definitely doing her best somewhere far, far away.

Chapter 5: The Admission

Today was the day of the entrance ceremony, and the road leading to the gates of the Imperial Knight Academy was crowded with carriages entering the school grounds. Many of them bore the crests of prominent families, indicating that they brought nobles from across the empire. Some were unmarked, and these were most likely carrying the children of wealthy merchants and landowners. None of the prospective students were walking; only servants and attendants crossed the gates on foot. None, save for Wynn.

“At last, I am here,” he said to himself, looking at the old building in the southern part of the capital. It had used to be the Palace in the days long gone, until one of the previous Emperors had erected a new one in the eastern part of Simurgh. When the construction of that had been completed, the newly vacated complex had been converted into a school for the Empire’s knights. Since then, it had been continuously remodelled and expanded, eventually reaching its present, unusually large, footprint. Today, it was hailed as the largest building on the continent, larger even than the current Imperial Palace which housed the offices of the Knight Order and the laboratories of the Imperial Wizards. Those knights and wizards taught students of the Academy. During times of war, the gates of this place were an impregnable barrier to enemies. In more peaceful years, they were a display of the Empire’s might in front of foreign dignitaries.

Wynn adjusted the worn-out bag slung over his shoulders. It was a sorry thing, old and coming apart at the seams, that he had bought from Hannah. He joined the stream of noble scions and young masters — the school only admitted children between the ages of ten and sixteen — heading towards a cathedral deep inside the school grounds where the entrance ceremony was going to be held. They all had to walk since the carriages could go no further than the courtyard beyond the gates, and they had to do it under the sweltering sun, each of them with an ornate family sword hanging from their waist, and followed by a gaggle of attendants hauling luggage. Wynn, carried by that river

of people, stuck out like a sore thumb. Soon, the wide plaza in front of the temple filled to the brim with people. People who weren't used to be kept waiting or having to stand in a line. Chaos ensued.

"All servants are to wait somewhere else!"

The Academy staff, already expecting this to happen as it had every other year, intervened promptly.

"Hey, you! Can't you hear?" asked a middle-aged official, approaching Wynn who was bewildered by the commotion. "All servants are to leave the plaza for now."

Wynn pulled out a document carefully tucked away in his breast pocket. It was the precious proof that he had passed the admission exam. When he had received it he had been so elated that he had been unable to sleep for three days straight. Not that anyone else had known about it at the time.

"Oh? Is that an admission certificate?"

"Yes, sir. I will be attending the school this semester."

"To attend to your master's needs, I presume? Where is he? Has he finished all the formalities yet?"

"I am on my own, sir. I haven't finished the formalities involved."

"Oh, how surprising. You don't look like someone from a noble or a merchant family." The man's eyes widened from shock. "Congratulations, I guess."

"Ah, thank you..."

Wynn looked down at his clothes (newly bought from a second-hand store), at the sword hanging by his waist (a used blade bought from a smith just for the day), and at his clearly worn out bag. He stood out even among the neatly dressed servants that he should have been blending in with. Honestly, he couldn't believe he was standing here either.

"Hmm... Wynn Bard, is it? Come with me, boy."

The official led him into one of the many curtained-off rooms where he took the certificate and issued the boy a set of clothing and a key.

“Your school uniform, and a key to your room. There are changing rooms inside the cathedral, you can dress there.”

“Thank you very much for your help, sir.”

“Ah. Since you’re here on your own, feel free to leave your belongings here and come back for them once you’re done changing.”

“Understood, sir.”

Wynn went into the cathedral as instructed and headed towards the changing room. The place was huge — less a room, more a hall — and full of people that had already finished changing. Some of them looked like they already knew each other, already chatting amongst themselves. He made his way past all of them, into an empty corner where he let go of the satchel and started to change.

“Hey, you! Commoner!” he heard someone call out with scorn from behind. He looked back. A group of boys his age was approaching with new uniforms in hand. All of them were wearing fine silken clothing. “Whose attendant are you?”

“Nobody’s.”

“Then begone. We are going to change here,” said the apparent leader of the group, pushing Wynn aside. Then, he cursed and kicked Wynn’s belongings away. “And this garbage is in the way too.”

“What are you doing?!” cried out Wynn, as he rushed to pick up his belongings.

“Insolence!” the leader’s lackeys exploded in outrage. “How dare you speak like this to Young Master Jade!”

They all reached for the swords at their waists, but the boy called Jade stopped them with a raised hand.

“Calm down. A noble must be magnanimous. We cannot be offended by every town boy’s natural ignorance and lack of manners.”

He reached out with a hand.

“I apologize, friend,” he said with a cheerful smile. “I did not think this

belonged to you.”

But that smile did not reach the eyes. There was no room there for mirth among all the vanity and pride belonging to somebody used to belittling others.

“I did not expect,” he added in a quiet whisper, “to find all this trash in this corner. There is no place for the likes of you at the Knight Academy. Do not ever forget that.”

Jade let go of Wynn’s hand and discreetly wiped it clean with a silk handkerchief. Then, he moved past Wynn and started to change his clothes. Wynn bit his lips and decided to move away, to find a different empty spot to change. Nobody seemed to care. All that the onlookers had seen had been Jade shaking the commoner’s hand and apologizing. Such grace, such broad-mindedness, who here could compare to the son of Marquis van Cliffdorf? They could not hear the whispers; they would not notice Wynn’s vexation.

Wynn had no specific plans for the time after the ceremony, so he started to leave the site amidst a group of likeminded students. Suddenly, he felt a light tap on the back.

“Hey, hey! Wait up.” Looking behind, he saw a boy with short, red hair and a brazen smile on his face. “That was quite a mess back there. I’m Locke, Locke Marin. Nice meeting you.”

“Wynn Bard.”

“I knew it!—”

Knew what? wondered Wynn.

“—I knew the name of my roommate belonged to somebody I didn’t know.”

“...You know all the other students?”

“Well,” answered Locke with a laugh, “not all of them, of course.” He caught up to Wynn and started to walk beside him. “My family are merchants, knowing people is a talent of ours. Everybody I met at the high society parties, even the children of the knights I haven’t met but heard about. But your name was one I could not place or recognize. So, I sought you out.”

“Oh, I see.”

“That guy from earlier? Son of General van Cliffdorf. Marquis family. Illustrious pedigree. His clique contains the sons of nobles from the man’s faction. Do not get onto his bad side if you plan to be a knight.”

“I’ll be careful. Thank you.”

The advice went to waste. The first day had the new students take part in a fencing class, one with mock duels. The outcome left Jade cursing venomously.

“Damn it... Damn it!” swore the young noble to himself, strongly gripping the sword in his hand.

The hateful commoner, Wynn, stood calmly before him. The lowly commoner just triumphed in a clash of swords against him! The wretch’s grades in academics — history, military theory, mathematics — and magic were abysmal. He clearly lacked the prior tutoring of the students from the wealthier and more prestigious backgrounds. He had even less magic than the children of already lacking merchants. So Jade had decided to give the failure a good beating and teach the commoner his place. He had decided to wipe the stain from the illustrious pages of the Simurgh Knight Academy. After all, he knew how to channel magic into his blade to make it sharper.

But when they had faced each other for the first time, the blade had instantly been forced out of his hand with a clang. He had been startled, but had decided it must have been an accident, bad luck. He had just let his guard down. But the next clash had ended the same way.

He had been completely defeated.

Humiliated.

In front of all the students.

By the time the instructor had announced the end of the class, Jade had lost hold of his blade nine whole times.

Trash... This piece of trash... He was absolutely livid and glared daggers at Wynn, who was obviously putting his practice weapons away. His scared gaggle of sycophants was too afraid to approach. *Does he really think he can make me look like a fool just like that? I will **never** let this go.*

Finally, the end of the year came, and with it, the squire selection. Those that passed the tests or displayed exceptional skill would be promoted. They would still be students, of course, but their responsibilities would increase. Those that failed would, in effect, repeat the year along with the incoming freshmen.

“Winner, —”

Wynn closed his eyes as his opponent shouted in jubilation. The format of the exam had been different this year, the hand-to-hand combat had come only after an exchange of magical attacks. And, unfortunately, the other party specialized in magic. Unlike the other boy, Wynn had few options when it came to offensive spells and barely a fraction of his opponent’s magic power. Wynn’s defensive wall had collapsed in a few brief moments, ending the match there and then. He hadn’t seen Jade’s dark smile in that moment.

The nobleman’s revenge was just beginning. He **would** make Wynn pay.

Chapter 6: The fourth spring

For Jade van Cliffdorf, becoming a knight is merely a checkpoint. (TL: name is Kuraifudorufu)

Since the Marquis Cliffdorf's House had produced generations of knights, the House held important offices in the imperial military.

As the eldest child of a renowned family, Jade began attending knight school at age 13. After a year as an apprentice knight, at the end of the second year, he finally fulfilled all of the requirements to become a true knight.

Despite this, since it was still necessary to attend knight school for six years, he was still officially a student.

Jade had just returned to the Cliffdorf mansion in the capital.

In the mansion's largest room, Marquis Welt van Cliffdorf sat at a round table.

He was Jade's father.

Welt held a post as a general. While he had been a soldier he was fair-skinned, but now, his face became pudgy, and after having never held a sword for a long time, he became ugly and fat.

When Jade entered the room, he bowed towards his father.

"I have returned, Honorable Father."

"It is good to see you back, Jade" [1]

He slowly sat into the seat across from her father, at which he pointed.

‘Is such a man the general of the Imperial Knight Order?’

‘His ugly stomach was swollen, the meat on his chin sagged.’

‘If even this man can become a general, then I—’

While actually holding her father in contempt and smiling at such gossip, he began the conversation.

“So, Honorable Father, the reason you called me back so urgently is?”

“Do you know about the circumstances of the Brave?”

“Of course, she’s famous after all. Isn’t she the daughter of the Mavis Ducal House, Leticia Van Mavis-dono?”

“That is correct.”

“I hear that she is an extremely beautiful lady.”

Jade does not personally know Leticia.

She was treated as a problem child and never had her debut in high society during her childhood. After the oracle declared her to be the Brave, she left immediately

However, since Leticia's portrait was placed in the newspapers, her appearance was shown with many news articles, causing her beauty to be widely known.

"I have met her twice, once at the audience with His Majesty, and once during the ball, and I can attest to her matchless beauty. As she is still 14 years old, even I would want to join the fray." [2]

Welt smiled vulgarly.

"Hou, but surely other men haven't given up on her?" [3]

"Prince Alfred had also asked His Majesty to invite her to become a princess. Well, the Brave has declined the request for now."

Welt's body shook as he stifled his laughter.

"The Brave's invitation to the imperial household was meant to restrain our House."

"The Crown Prince did that?"

Jade was surprised.

The status of a Crown Princess should hold tremendous appeal to a lady of nobility. To ignore it...

It would be understandable if Leticia, as a duke's daughter, declined the Imperial Family's wishes due to the difference in social status. After all, the duke's status was second to the Imperial Family's status.

However, to refuse the proposal of becoming the wife of the Crown Prince, as expected of a Brave.

“Didn’t Lord Mavis say anything?”

“Although she’s his daughter, she’s still the Brave. It appears that she has the upper hand. Either way, that saves us some trouble.”

“Honorable Father, what do you say we do?”

“Obtain the Brave’s hand in marriage, Jade.”

Welt’s laughter turned into a smile.

“Your ages are close. If you can marry the Brave, the Clifdolf House will be able to resist the Imperial Family.”

To the plebeians of this country, no, the people of the whole continent, the Brave is a sacred existence.

If the Brave is Jade’s wife...

They could shut up the Emperor, who has recently been meddling in the affairs of us nobles.

The Emperor had talked about lowering taxes and improving the standard of living of the people in Marquis Clifdolf’s territory, and Welt was fed up with it.

It would be hard for the Emperor to interfere if the Brave married into the

family.

They would become the most influential nobles, the Emperor would be silenced, and they would have even more power.

Looking at his father, who was planning to gain power by obtaining the Brave as his son's wife, Jade smiled while looking at his father coldly.

He was already imagining the future of having the Brave as his wife.

Regardless of his own efforts, he would become a general just because he was of noble birth. [4]

He would most likely become a general without even doing anything.

Furthermore, desire swirled within Jade's heart.

'Even such a man could become a general.'

(If that's the case, then from here on out...)

'If I could marry Leticia the Brave, I may even end up as the emperor.'

Jade suddenly felt his blood boil.

'The current Imperial Family is soft on the plebeians.'

'Instead of appointing those of high nobility to become knights, now, many plebeians have been promoted. Furthermore, in the most prestigious school, the knight school, the plebeians dared to walk around so brazenly.'

Jade couldn't stand it.

As somebody from the Ducal House, Leticia the Brave inherited the blood of nobility.

To Jade, it didn't matter whether his wife was ugly or beautiful.

Instead, noble blood was important to him.

Even if his ambitions cause the imperial household and the Mavis House to disappear, he doesn't mind the existence of nobles. [5]

'By obtaining her hand in marriage, I would gain many allies.'

'The true value of her noble blood is known not only by nobles, but also the foolish plebeians.[6]

'Thus, the country will be reborn, with the blue-blooded nobility ruling over the masses, as is natural.' [7]

"So, Honorable Father,"

While thinking about it, Jade interrupted Welt's tirade on his future prospects.

"What is it?"

"Where is Miss Leticia right now?"

For their plans to go on, they must first gain the Brave's hand in marriage.

(The Brave is but a fourteen year old little girl. There are many ways to obtain her.)

(However, I must first meet her in person.)

At being interrupted, Welt wore a slightly bitter expression. He rose from his chair, and walked toward the window, his belly jiggling.

“Right now, she is staying at the palace. Later, she will return to her Master, but His Majesty seemed to not want to let her leave. Every night, he holds a ball and a banquet to occupy her.”

“In order to meet her, should I attend the ball too?”

“Exactly. The Cliffdorf is sponsoring the ball soon. At that time, create an opportunity. Think about a present to gift her.”

“It will be done.”

Aside from these two people, other nobles are working to obtain Leticia the Brave.

Possibly, this could include those of foreign countries.

They planned to steal a march on those people.

Jade smiled unconsciously at the gossip. [8]

Clear blue sky, and the gentle sunlight signaled the coming of spring.

Due to the preparations for the Knight School entrance ceremony, Wynn headed to the cathedral in the morning, wiped some sweat on his forehead with a towel on his neck, and then looked up at the shining sky.

The migratory birds that announced the arrival of spring appeared to be white lines in the blue sky.

“Oooi! Wynn!”

Hearing the voice from behind him, he turned and saw his roommate Locke Marine. waving while running towards him.

“Good morning, Locke.”

“Instead of only attending the entrance ceremony, you’re helping with the preparations?”

Locke looked at Wynn’s full hands.

Since the cathedral was lacking chairs, Wynn was carrying one, as requested.

“A teacher saw me doing independent practice. Anyways, had no other plans.”

It’s the fourth time.

Locke takes a chair from Wynn and walks with him.

“More importantly, aren’t you now an apprentice knight? Congratulations!”

“Aah, well..”

While, scratching his head with his free left hand, Locke gave a half-hearted response.

“Honestly, to think I would do it before you...”

“I did not have enough ability, so I failed the examination.”

This happened three times.

Somehow... I couldn't put magic power into the practice sword.[9]

When compared to magic-enforced steel, ordinary steel may as well be wooden.

“Not only that, but his opponent was the top student of his class.”

Two years ago, his match ended after having being restrained by magic and disarmed easily.

“Besides, your opponent was formidable, and you had a handicap.”

In a battlefield, one cannot choose their opponent. If I cannot win against whomever my opponent is, I do not have the qualifications to be a knight.

(Sheesh, what a stubborn guy.)

At these words, Locke looked at the back of his friend, who instead of resting, continued to work silently. [10]

They had been roommates for three years.

Locke had never met somebody like Wynn.

The morning after the entrance ceremony, Locke woke up to find that Wynn was not in bed. If he searched the courtyard, he would find him alone swinging an old bokken.

Every day, he would return late, after lectures and strict training sessions finished, he would leave in a hurry.

The nobles and merchant children would gathered school, on the other hand...

After class, many would go to town and party. The ones who didn't go out to play were few.

Locke was interested in where Wynn went, and so, he tailed Wynn. [11]

Wynn would be at the bottom of the small kitchen washing potatoes.

After washing them, he would act as a waiter in the dining hall.

It was his habit.

He would return from work late at night.

That day, while Wynn returned from work without being able to call out, Locke didn't feel like playing around, and so he returned to the dorm.

He (Wynn) came home as if nothing happened. However, he was drenched in sweat from swinging his bokken.

Ever since the entrance ceremony, Wynn's swordsmanship surpassed the rest, and his peers were surprised at his grades, but only Locke accepted it as a natural outcome.

If only his hard work could be seen in the results.

When he was young, apart learning the basics from the adventurers, Wynn's swordsmanship was self-taught, but even the aristocratic children, who were taught by famous masters couldn't come close. [12]

Even then, Wynn struggled in the classroom.

When compared with his classmates, who had been taught by tutors, his academic performance was markedly inferior.

Furthermore, he had low amounts of magic power.

At the test during his first year, against an opponent whose strength was offensive magic, Wynn was helpless.

During his second year, he prepared countermeasures, but since the test only allowed the practice swords to be used, he was unable to use the countermeasure, and lost like he did before.

On his third year, he failed to find a way to use the practice sword to counter the magic.

After seeing this, Locke approached a teacher for Wynn's sake, but after the teacher said "Don't interrupt the test," they gave up.

Now, Locke has become an apprentice knight.

Locke was the second son of a merchant house.

The eldest son was to succeed their parents, but rather than apprentice himself to another mercantile house and marry into another family, he enrolled in Knight School, hoping to live freely.

With that sort of half-hearted resolution, considering from Wynn's desperate efforts, his becoming an apprentice knight seems accidental.

Locke felt guilty towards Wynn.

"Ano, sorry."

After delivering the items to the official at the cathedral, he was about to set out to help with other work on the way back.

"What is it, senpai?"

Looking back, he saw a young girl standing there.

“Oo, a beautiful person.”

Locke unintentionally muttered. though he was an admittedly reclusive person, even was unconsciously charmed by her.

The spring sunlight seemed to shimmer as it fell upon her golden hair, and her green eyes. (Countdown: five...)

The girl possessed a sort of translucent beauty.

“A, aa, should I be called senpai? Are you a new student?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

She nodded while smiling sweetly.

“If I have finished registration, I need to change into my uniform, but I don’t see the special changing room for nobles here.”

“Ah, if it’s that, then this isn’t the right way.”

The girl was headed for the commoner’s changing room.

“Sorry, but since it is early, there is barely anybody here, and the other people I asked were busy,”

apologized the girl.

“You two senpais seemed to be walking around idly.”

“Eh, well...”

If that’s the case, then, Wynn, you should show her around, since you’ll be heading towards the entrance ceremony anyways.

“But I still have to help out...”

“Aren’t they all chores anyway? I’ll stay behind and do them for you. What point is helping out with preparations if you don’t help her?”

Waving his hand, Lock quickly turned away and left.

“Well then, Wynn. See you later!”

“Thank you Locke!”

After thanking Locke, Wynn turned to face the girl.

“Well, let’s go then.”

“Okay.”

The girl walked behind Wynn, following him.

He felt a nagging feeling in the back of his mind. [13]

“I thought you were my senior, but are you also a new student like me?”

“I am your senior, but this is my fourth time attending the entrance ceremony, so I’m essentially a new student.”

“Then, you will become my classmate?”

“It will be like that. Please excuse me, but since you’re using the noble’s changing rooms, are you a foreign exchange student?”

Generally, even the noble children change in the common changing room by the cathedral.

Only royalty and foreign exchange students of prominent nobles were allowed to use the special changing rooms.

“I was born in this country, but there are a few special circumstances..”

“So it’s like that, huh. Should I speak more respectfully?”

“Nah, I don’t mind how it is now”

The girl let out a giggle.

“After attending for four years, how can you still hope to be a knight?”

“I swore to myself that I would become a knight, without fail.”

“Even if this path is long and hard, I will continue to struggle without giving up.”

Believing in this, Wynn continued to swing his sword everyday.

“Furthermore, an close friend in the past is still trying her hardest alone in a distant place. Even if I don’t become a knight, I want to be able to proudly say that I have worked hard..” (TL: four...)[14]

Having said that, Wynn embarrassedly looked away from the girl.

Thus...

“It’s not strange....”

As the girl’s small mutter trailed off, she realized she had become moved to tears.

“What am I saying to somebody I’ve met for the first time?. Anyways, what’s your reason for enrolling?”

When Wynn asked that question, the girl’s face cleared up and smiled again.

“I am– Hmm... There is a person who I want to walk beside. He is my light, and I am still chasing his back.”

At that, the girl's smile was so fascinating, that Wynn was unconsciously charmed.

(That smile, where have I seen it before?) (TL: three..)

“Ah, it seems that we have arrived.”

Stopping, Wynn watched as the girl gave the private room a knock before entering.

“Leticia-sama!” (TL: two...)

A large middle-aged man came out from within.

Despite his graying hair, he still had a youthful countenance, and a body tempered like steel.

It was the Knight School's principal, Zaunas-shi.

“You were so late, I thought you were lost.”

“Please excuse me. I actually was a little lost.”

Leticia lightly bowed her head to the principal.

However, Wynn was not paying attention, since he was paying attention to Leticia's impish smile.

If I remember correctly, you're the the one entering school for the fourth time, Wynn Byrd-kun. Thank you for guiding her here, but now please step back.

“Are... are you Leti?” (TL: one...)

Interrupting the principal, he stepped closer to the girl.

He had a surprised and uneasy expression.

“I just realized it, but is it as I thought....?”

Hands on her waist, Leticia sighed.

“It’s been a long time, Onii-chan. I’m back.” (TL: Zero! Celebrate!)

Leticia flashed a dazzling smile at the dumbfounded Wynn.

AN: Finally... Finally they have met.

Did I write it skillfully?

I am more aware of my writing ability ...



Leticia



Chapter 7: Thoughts from Four Years Ago ①

Even before the rooster began to crow, Wynn was already awake.

Ever since he made the oath when he was five, he would always wake up at this time, without exception.

Looking around the small room, he saw Locke on the other bed still snoring.

Carefully as to not wake Locke up, he changed into training clothes, grabbed his practice sword, and then left the room.

Outside the dorm, the spring dawn wind was very chilly.

After warming his body with a light warm-up, he began swinging the practice sword.

Byuu,Byuu. Only the sound of the sword cutting through the air could be heard in the tranquil morning.

Wynn would repeat this scene every day.

— — No.

Something was amiss. [1]

Today, something was off, causing his sword swings to be off.

He stopped his swings to adjust his breaths, closing his eyes in concentration.

His head was filled with thoughts of his now-strong close friend Leti.

He could see her figure clearly in his mind.

During yesterday's entrance ceremony...

The noisy cathedral immediately became silent.

Only the sounds of breathing, and slight movements could be heard, and in that silence, a lone girl walked to the middle.

In the cathedral, was a tall platform.

Their backs straightened as her wasteless steps exuded a cold atmosphere.

As she walked up the stairs, the sunlight that passed through the stained glass shone on her golden hair and seemed to give it a soft glow

The girl's figure attracted attention of not only the students and the teachers, but also the knight leader, temple officials, and invited nobles.

Without any tension at all, the girl reached the top of the stairs, and slowly turned around.

At that moment, unexpectedly, her body was bathed in light — Everybody saw that mirage.

An unbelievable presence.

The sight of the girl made everyone left everyone breathless. However...

Suddenly, her frigid appearance turned into a gentle smile.

As if time had once again unfrozen, the atmosphere became relaxed again, and all around, sighs of relief could be heard.

“How are you everyone? I am the freshman representative Leticia.”

Leticia spoke.

Once again, silence took hold of the cathedral.

The sound of people settling down was heard in the cathedral.

“I was chosen as the representative, but unlike you, I am not aiming to become a knight. That said, I do have a lot of battle experience, which I hope to share with you all.”

Closing her eyes, she slowly put her right hand to her chest.

“Even though the Demon Lord has been defeated, there are still many threats in the world. As knights, you must protect the people around you. Together, we shall learn. Together, we shall work. Then, someday, together, we shall fight.”

She bowed slowly.

One by one, people started clapping. Soon, the once silent cathedral was filled with the sound of thunderous applause.

As Leticia slowly straightened her body, the people in the cathedral saw a smile blossoming on her face.

The person standing on the stage during yesterday’s entrance ceremony was his close friend Leti.

If one looked at Wynn, they would see standing at the end of the line of new students.[2]

In merely four years, to think that in those four years, she would change that much.

Shaking his head while exhaling, he renewed his concentration.

He thought of Leticia's silhouette wielding her sword. [3]

Until then, his image of Leticia was the one from four years ago. Now, he was able to imagine Leticia's distinct figure preparing her sword.

The incongruity in his sword swings just now was caused by the difference between his image of Leti and reality.

Therefore, after reconciling the difference, he was able to swing it properly.

The sight of Wynn practicing each day returned to normal.

However, the scene was slightly different today. [4]

At a glance, it hadn't changed at all.

Somebody was hidden in a building, looking at the boy two years older than her, who was solely swinging his sword.

It was a scene that Leticia had watched every day.

In those days, she herself had spent her time similarly.

It was as if the scene was repeated right now.

Every day, the tutor would compare her to her older sisters.

For better or for worse, her docile sisters would comply with the tutor's orders, and learned to etiquette and behaviour befitting of a noble lady, while

Leticia only remembered bad memories of being scolded for being unable to memorize the alphabet.

“You can’t even do these things. Your elder sisters were able to this at your age, you know?”

“Why are your movements so unrefined? There isn’t a shred of elegance in them.”

Her parents would receive the tutor’s reports, which contained only praise for the two obedient sisters.

One morning, Leticia woke up, slipped out of her room, and exited the gloomy mansion.

Without being able to do anything well, she was scolded every day.

Their master’s attitude also influenced the attendants.

Even the attendants’ scornfully gazed at her.

Even though they did it while they thought she wasn’t looking, the extraordinarily perceptive girl endured those gazes without snapping.

And so, she ran.

With only thinking of escaping, he ran away from the gloomy estate. [5]

Although there were many guards patrolling the large estate, the young Leticia was able to reach the gate without being seen.

The young gate guard would yawn with a “Fuaa...” sound.

In that interval, Leticia slipped under the bars, and successfully exit through the gate.

It was Leticia's first time outside of the estate alone.

She hadn't chosen a particular destination.

She had merely wanted to run away from the detestable lessons.

Even then, Leticia ran in the cold morning of the capital.

Even adults could get lost in the vast capital.

To the six-year-old Leticia, it was a great adventure.

Even if it was only exploring the straight main street.

She walked down the street while the city was still asleep.

Despite the great adventure that was exciting at the start, the girl started to feel lonely in the silent streets.

It was as if she were the only one in the world.

It was scary.

However, she didn't become agitated.

Feeling these feelings that she didn't understand, she started walking, regaining her spirit with each step. [6]

At that time....

A lone boy appeared in the down-hearted Leticia's view.

Holding a wooden stick, he was whole-heartedly swinging it.

Was he practicing swordsmanship?

Compared to her elder brother who was learning swordplay, his movements were unrefined. However, his movements still captivated Leticia.

Despite the shoddy movements, it was full of vigor and enthusiasm.

His eyes shone with the light of determination as he swung the stick while gritting his teeth.

The young girl sensed this atmosphere.

She had longed for company in her little adventure.

The boy noticed her stare and looked at her.

Without thinking, her curiosity outweighing hesitance, she gathered her courage and approached.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm training."

"Is that interesting?"

"I don't know whether or not it's interesting, but it's pleasant."

“May Leti do it too?”

The boy agreed, and Leticia picked up a fallen stick, and swung it beside the boy.

At this, the boy stared at her for a while, while breathing a sigh, “Fuu...” began to swing with her.

Although he was swinging his stick, he would sometimes observe Leticia.

Worry and bewilderment mixed in her face.

It was the first time in a while since she had been paid attention to.

After the training, when Leticia finally said “Good morning” to the boy, and timidly asked if she could join him tomorrow, the boy nodded with a bewildered expression.

With the merry feeling overshadowing the fact that she had run away from home, even when she returned to receive a strict scolding from her parents and the tutor, the feeling did not fade.

Because she had found a place where she belonged.

From then on, she would meet the boy every day.

After asking the tutor, she received a bokken.

After a while, her parents no longer paid attention to her escapades.

They only paid attention to Reiruzu and her two elder sisters, of whom the tutor sang praises.

For Leticia, this was convenient.

That boy, Wynn, would always train alongside Leti.

Even when they ran, he would run alongside Leticia, never running at an unreasonable speed.

Even when practicing with the bokken, despite being able to handle Leticia's strikes, he never injured her, but rather slowly instructed her.

She naturally understood Wynn's teachings, unlike the when tutor would forcefully give her an unreasonable amount of material. [7]

When the tutor assigned her a book, she would take it from the mansion to Wynn, who would happily read it, working through its contents together.

Instead of the tutor's method of forcing the information into her, she understood it when they thought through it together.

In the year that she spent with Wynn, she felt herself grow and mature.

She was even gradually able to understand her elder siblings' swordplay and magic lessons.

Even after the tutor had the attitude of having given up on her, she still learned magic and swordplay from him.

He had already given up on her abilities.

Therefore, they were unable to recognize her true ability.

Until that fateful day, when the oracle announced Leticia to be the "Brave".

Wynn silently swung his sword.

Leticia silently held her hand to her chest and closed her eyes.

During her journey, when many painful things occurred, if she thought of Wynn, she became energized.

Courage would gush forth.

When those painful things occurred, it was because she would borrow his unyielding determination and believed, that she could persevere.

‘The one who guided me was you. Because I wanted to meet you, I became not just the Brave, but a determined person.

Leticia could clearly see Wynn swinging his sword.

Her current ability was far from the her in the image.

However...

She unconcealed her presence.

Drawing her practice sword, she suddenly jumped out of the shadows.

“Onii-chan!”

“Na,,, Le-Leti!?”

Striking at Wynn with overwhelming pressure, she covered the ground between them instantly.

‘This is my true power now.’

Leticia was now standing beside the boy she had wanted to stand beside for so long. [8]

‘Surely it was because of you, that I was able to believe and struggle on up to this point.’

Chapter 8: Thoughts from Four Years Ago ②

The Hero Leticia van Mavis.

Was appointed hero by the oracle at the age of 10 years, together with their peers, the Swordsman, the holy woman and a great sage went on a trip to subdue the Maou.

The power is characteristic of a hero, besides its immense power magic.

Especially, its excellent handling of fencing gave him the nickname of [The Princess God of the Sword].

She saved many countries and races on his journey to subdue the demon king.

The people who live in the continent celebrated independently of his country or race to which they belonged.

therefore, various countries and races investigated everything concerning the hero.

Also, the aristocrats and rich, collect information from newspaper articles of each country to make an article about her.

Moreover, many are fascinated with the portrait of Letizia that came in the article about her.

The person who has an overwhelming power called hero is not seen in a 14-year-old girl.

however, its unique appearance emanates dignity.

People who confronted directly to Leticia, they felt the difference and began to tell the other people.

Her fame echoed in a continent and was sometimes admired like God and she became a living legend.

Some said that Leticia was [a person close to God].

“Letty...you sit there?”

“Well, is... that, it has been a long time since my meeting with my Onii-chan, I felt happy. “(Leticia)

“Because I am good, sit down” (Wynn)

“...Yes” (Leticia)

She sat on the bed Wynn in an upright manner and dejectedly.

As for the golden hair tying in the back of the head, Hung down feebly.

“This child is the child of yesterday? yesterday I did not realize, Maybe Leticia-sama!?, Why in this room? I mean, why seiza!?” (Locke) (TL: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiza>)

Locke panics when he saw the two people inside the room.

Wynn seeing with arms crossed and a Letizia in seiza starts to move back and forth confused.

“Well, we should make some tea?”(Locke)

“Calm down Locke, anyway breakfast will be ready soon.” (Wynn)

Wynn subject to Locke he was about to run to the dining room in search of tea.

“Etto, Locke-san? Please, don’t go. “(Leticia)

While sitting upright Letizia, Locke with a sheepish grin lowered his head and apologized

“Aah! Leticia-sama is in our room! why is sitting in seiza! I do not know what’s going on here. Explain it!” (Locke)

Locke yells while holding his head.

“Yesterday was the first time Locke and Leticia reunion? You want to

introduce you to Leticia?”

Wynn start trying to reassure Locke.

It is seen, the expression of the lock already seems to begin to weep.

“The people who has read a newspaper can know about Leticia-sama!”(Locke)

“Well, calm down.”(Wynn)

“Why is the reason why Leticia-sama is sitting in seiza? You explain what is this! “(Locke)

Locke grabs the lapels with force, while Wynn exchanges glances with Leticia while leaning back.

“That is, Come here a moment” (Wynn)

When standing up from the bed, Wynn takes Locke to the bedroom window.

Locke resigns himself while Leticia still sitting in seiza, and he stands next to Wynn.

“Oh, I? What is this? “(Locke)

Locke looks out from the window ... abroad seem to have happened a typhoon or tornado, the leaves are scattered around, and the trees no longer

have branches.

“Well, as usual, I get up from the morning and I started practicing” (Wynn)

Wynn began to tell the story to Locke since it got up this morning.

“Onii-chan!”

“Ah..... Le, Letty!?”

Terrible sword.

From the shadow of the building reduced the distance instantly, Wynn was the person in question which had imagined so far.

Leticia brandishing the sword with a lateral attack.

Kiiin!! (maybe, sound of sword clashing)

“Gu~tsu...”

He stopped the sword with the blade, and all body weight.

Wind pressure generated by the sword Leticia, became a hit impact which hit to Wynn.

Though Wynn is slim, the body is tightened because it has forged in the childhood, It has more weight than it appears.

with only his brawn threw the body to Wynn, as was possible that thin arms of Leticia had so much power.

with the help of his limbs remained firm, in one way or another sidestepped the attack Leticia.

It struck it in numerical combination from there each other.

Leticia attacks quickly, while achieving some way to dodge, waiting for an opportunity to counterattack but, because the blows were too heavy this is the best I could do.

in order to take care of my body, it becomes impossible go on the offensive

“it’s time to see the end, again you’ve gotten stronger”

But Onii-chan, can nobody easily handle my sword until here?

Letitia who blithely floats smile and wields a sword.

Liberal color floated in the expression.

Still, she has not been serious.

In fact, sword speed of Leticia has become faster in every single blow.

As if he had no limit.

While looking for an opening, Wynn is still trying to keep pace.

Defend yourself from the continuous attacks of Leticia, it makes gradually weakens.

However, if he is distracted for a moment in an instant it can be felled.

Therefore, Leticia saw him exhausted, makes a strong attack.

Kīiin!

Due to the impact, Wynn is sent flying an enormous distance from Leticia.

While regaining breath, Leticia is staring.

“Letty”(Wynn)

“What? Onii-chan. “(Leticia)

Finally, an opportunity is created.

When Wynn lowers the sword set up with both hands slowly, It approaches

without change to Leticia.

Leticia also sets up the sword with both hands and observes Wynn's attitude.

"Etto"(Leticia)

"Yes?"(Wynn)

Wynn begins to look around slowly.

"What about this? "

"Ah....."

Wynn watched what was a scene of scattered trees around, caused by wind pressure exerted by the sword of Leticia.

Wynn and Leticia changed their swords by brooms and started cleaning the surroundings.

"that's how it was this morning" (Wynn)

with a complex expression, Locke looks at Leticia that is still sitting in seiza.

As this room was originally a part of what was once the palace contains several defensive magic's.

in addition, the school also used soundproof magic

unlike when was a palace, the sons of nobles now live here, even though there not was anyone than will awaken so early to train as did Wynn, because of the noise due to the training, Complaints are received in the upper portion of the school.

So, one of the many causes of this situation was no for the damage of the bedrooms, if not by the damage to trees.

“jeez...”

Wynn stood in front of Leticia and folded his arms.

Letitia look at Wynn with in upturned eyes, she looked like a girl her age.

And, Wynn opens mouth.

“Why did you started to attack with the sword?” (Wynn)

“I want to show my power to Onii-chan” (Leticia)

“Should not do something as dangerous as abruptly!” (Wynn)

“Ugu” (Leticia)

It is contracting Letitia to Wynn's sharp scolding.

"Certainly you have become strong, but not see around you?" (Wynn)

Wynn begins preaching endlessly from there... As to Locke "Hey, could turn around" He continued half an hour before stopping.

Leticia than is sitting straight, looks at to Wynn in response to the words of Locke

"I think that Leticia-sama has already pondered" (Locke)

Leticia nod your head for the words of Locke.

With an expression with tears in his eyes, the dignity of the hero is lost.

"If you say so Locke, Well, it's time for breakfast" (Wynn)

"Yes, I have hungry"

Finally, the reprimand was over and leticia had begun to being hungry.

the reason was for the sword fight.

The foot is numb by fault of sitting straight, Letitia stands up while falters.

“Look,” (Wynn)

“thank you” (Leticia)

Leticia expresses a happy smile while holding hand of Wynn.

“No problem”

Locke watches the two people in front of he and start talking.

“Why Wynn and Leticia are so intimate?” (Locke)

“It is because it is my childhood friend”(Wynn)

Wynn responds while giving support to Leticia that even staggers.

“Before Letty travel outside for four years, she was a best friend” (Wynn)

“Best friend.....”(Leticia)

For a moment, Laetitia looks cloudy, neither Wynn or Locke heard her mutter.

“I thought that I could not seeing you anymore, I never thought I could not go back”

“return?”

Subjugate the Maou and go home, back is strange?

Locke begins to open his mouth to make a Tsukkomi.

“Well, I thought the princess, who was to be married at the age of ten. However, Letty. Would you balance a sword in the family in which married almost recently? You must have been able to find a good teacher, that’s why you sent home?” (Wynn)

Wynn basically works to pay school fees after the study ends and trains.

And within the school, people who are close to him are Locke and a few other people.

Therefore, Wynn did not know.

So if you know the Maou was defeated by the hero, him do not know the name of this hero.

Also, him do not have the opportunity to read newspapers (When he returned to the house parents in a long vacation, Locke read a newspaper), Of course, was not able to see the figure of the hero.

Leticia and Locke were speechless.

Leticia had misinterpreted that had married, when in fact he went to a trip.

Locke, saw the little information I had Wynn.

And Leticia's attitude toward Wynn, Locke thought this.

It is occasionally unrivaled not to know...

However, although if he knew he was Leticia was the hero, the attitude of Wynn would never change.

Chapter 9: Discord

“Brave!? Mavis-sama the Brave? The Mavis House’s third daughter?”

As Leticia was still unfamiliar with the Knight School, she lived in the female dorm used exclusively by those of high nobility. As for Wynn, Leticia confessed to him that she was the “Brave”.

“Un, That’s me? Leticia van Mavis.”

“So it’s true? ...I didn’t know...”

Wynn looked closely at Leticia, who was walking beside him.[1]

Who would’ve thought that the rumored Brave was his close friend.

“From the first time we met, I thought she was a noble, but I never heard her full name. I didn’t care who she was, or where she was from. However, that the Brave’s name was Mavis... I did hear.”

Wynn would frequently hear about the Brave’s journey from the merchants and adventurers who stayed at the “Wataridori Pavilion”[2] while he worked at the inn.

The view of children of the town playing the “Mavis the Brave” game, swinging around wooden swords, was commonly seen.

Aside from the merchants and adventurers that traveled to the city, bards and

minstrels performed stories of the Brave's feats to the public.

In order to save the prince of a certain country who was turned to stone, she subdued the demon who cursed him, and lifted the curse.

In another country, she defeated a priest who sacrificed a person every night in order to revive an evil god, and rescued the captured people.

Furthermore, she retrieved a rare herb from an unexplored ancient forest in order to cure an unknown illness spreading through a city.

When it turned out that the the cause of the illness was a dragon living in a nearby cave who emitted miasma, she subjugated the dragon.

As for the purification —

When it spread that the Brave was the empire's Mavis Ducal House's hidden third daughter, the empire's citizens felt a patriotic pride in being the Brave's home country.

The Empire itself widely publicized the actions of the Mavis House's third daughter.

Wynn, who had read tales of heroic knights since childhood was also excited about the tales of the Brave who wandered the earth.

Now that he had grown, he knew that the knights that appeared in those epic tales didn't exist in reality.

However, the existence of the "Brave" taught him that those storybook knights were not merely a dream.

Although the Brave's feats were impossible for Wynn, if only he at least had a tenth of the strength, he would protect those who were suffering, as a knight.
[3]

That was something he aspired to be.[4]

The Mavis House's third daughter that he aspired to be, he didn't think she would be his friend Leti.

He looked at Leticia, who was beside him.

As in the past, his friend walked beside him.

Two years younger than him, her height did not even reach his shoulder, she had a delicate figure. [5]

Fighting the Demon Lord, the subordinate demons, and the monsters, it was more severe than the stories.

'I will try my hardest, so that I can return as soon as possible!'

The promises exchanged four years ago— He thought that those words wouldn't come true.

Nevertheless, she had now returned, and was walking beside him, as she had promised.

"You've tried your best, haven't you, Leti."

At the words that escaped from Wynn's lips, Leticia's feet stopped for a moment, causing her to hurriedly catch up after falling behind.

"Un!"

She showed a delighted, sparkling smile.

Four years ago, Leticia was unable to reveal that she was from the Mavis House.

She feared that Wynn would distance himself from her if he knew that she was a noble.

Generally, in an Imperial Knight Order, individuals did not use family names.

Officially, they use Knight Order rankings in order to prevent nobles from flaunting their influence in the court. [6]

The knight school adopted this practice. For example, Wynn Byrd would formally be called “Knight Cadet Wynn”, and not “Knight Cadet Byrd”, and Locke would not be called “Knight Cadet Marine”, but rather “Knight Cadet Locke”.

Even if she were a lady of nobility, Wynn wouldn’t have to call her by her family name.

However, Leticia was more famous than she would have wanted. [7]

She was known as the “Divine Sword Princess”, “One Closest to God”, and “Leticia van Mavis, the Brave”.

As the third daughter of the Empire’s Mavis Ducal House.

Leticia snuck a glance at Wynn beside her. [8]

Four years ago, they were approximately the same height.

Now, Leticia’s head did not even reach Wynn’s shoulders, and his young-ish body was growing into a strong build, and supple muscles.[9]

That morning, when they crossed swords, Wynn was several times stronger than she remembered four years ago.

The source of Leticia's art, which earned her the name "Divine Sword Princess", was most definitely Wynn.

It was the swordsmanship that fascinated her when she escaped to the town for the first time and met him.

Compared to that time, being more skillful with his sword techniques, he would have excelled if requirements were met, which the chances were probably were very few of at this school.[10]

Throughout her journey, she fought many enemies.

Many times, she had near death experiences, feeling despair.

However, in the end, Leticia would not give up and continued to fight.

Even with her magic power empty, and her companions injured, with only her spirit and sword unbroken, she would tear apart myriads of demons.

The swordsmanship that Leticia learned from Wynn was her greatest tool.

Therefore...

"You've tried your best, haven't you, Leti."

"Un!"

At Wynn's words, Leticia, from the bottom of her heart, felt delighted and relieved.[11]

Rather than being known as "The Brave", or as "The daughter of a noble", her relationship with Wynn as the pupil of her "Master" would not change from

now on.

For this reason, she couldn't help but marvel.

How was Wynn unable to become an apprentice knight?

While standing beside him, Leticia looked up to Wynn.

In order to find out, she asked him.

“Ne, what do we learn in Knight School?”

“If we were to talk about the lessons, then there are two types of classes, theory and practice. Practical combat classes include swordsmanship, spearmanship, or another martial art. Scout arts, stealth arts, survival arts are taught in the field. Magical combat classes are split into three types. Theory classes include tactics and military history, and of course, history and heraldry. Finally, there is Linguistics.”[12]

“Onii-chan, What classes do you take?”

“Well, for combat classes, martial arts and swordsmanship is required, but I also take the knife arts class. I also study history.”[13]

“Fuun, so it's like that.”

“What will you take, Leti?”

“I am too late to join a combat class, so I am focusing on studying the theory classes. Ah, but I plan on enrolling in the magic classes.”

“So you’re focusing on the theory classes.”

“But Leti’s strength is moving your body, and not using your brain though.”

“After all, I left when I was ten, didn’t I? I couldn’t study during the journey.”

Leticia became sullen, hitting Wynn’s head with a ‘pon pon’ sound.

“Ah, Wynn. Leticia-sama.”

“What is it, Locke?”

He suddenly called out from behind them.

Locke had been walking behind them for sometime now.

Since they seemed strange from the side, Locke walked behind them while looking around restlessly.

“What is it? Is your stomach sore?”

“No it isn’t!”

Seeing his friend with a pale face, Wynn called out to him in worry, but received a denial in a suppressed shout.

“You two, with this much attention on you, don’t be so calm!”

Looking around them, before they had noticed, Wynn and Leticia (and Locke...) were being stared at by the students headed to class.

“O, Oi. That, Isn’t that Leticia-sama?”

“Un. I saw her yesterday at the entrance ceremony, but, I didn’t see her this close!”

“But, who are the two boys beside Leticia-sama? Did we see them at the evening party?”

“Well, the boy beside her, I know. Isn’t he Wynn Byrd? I’m sure, that he’s the one that failed the selection test three times in a row.”

“For real? Such a guy exists? I could easily become a knight if I asked my father.”

“Me too, me too!” [14]

“I know, right? The examination is but a formality, since you can just pay to pass it.” [15]

“That guy, the commoner? There is no way that he can afford to pay.”

“Haa!? Such a person aiming to be a knight? I think not!”

“Hahaha!”

“Wynn felt as if somebody had poured cold water on his back.”

Though he said nothing, Locke noticed it.

However, he acted like he didn’t care.

He suddenly started chewing on his lower lip.

He had shown strength so far.

He understood his social status clearly. [16]

The people who attended here were either nobles, knights or children of rich people.

Locke was no exception.

If Locke had lived a life fitting his status, Wynn would have never gotten to know him.

Besides...

As they said, to become an apprentice knight, one needs money.

To be precise, connections and money.

“Wynn, don’t mind their words, okay?”

Locke patted him on the shoulder.

“Why is that beggar walking with Leticia-sama? There is a limit to not knowing

one's social status.”

Their words pierced his chest.

‘She’s Lady Leticia van Mavis, the Brave.’

Without having changed since four years ago, they met.

In those days, I didn’t know.

In those days, she wasn’t the Brave yet.

She was just a lost child. Now, I know who she really is.

To Wynn, she was a person who lived in a completely different world.

It felt like the Leticia who was once close to him suddenly became a distant figure.

“Onii-chan?”

Leticia looked at him with a worried face.

By all accounts, commoners like Wynn shouldn’t exchange words with her.

Only an innocent child could call her “Leti” so familiarly.

But now, he wasn’t a child anymore.

“Sorry, Leti... Leticia...-sama, Locke. I’ll go on ahead.”

Turning away, without seeing the two's faces, Wynn started running.
Leticia and Locke were left behind, motionlessly looking at his back.

Chapter 10: First class ①

“First off, let me congratulate you on your enrollment.”

They were at the Knight School’s practice field.

Since the vast field was originally used by the royal palace, the school repurposed several gardens to build the training field.

A stone wall separated the field from its surroundings, and many wooden training dummies were lined along the wall.

At several points, sheds were built, containing practice swords that would be available when needed.

In a corner of the practice field...

Gathered there, were 20 of the new freshmen.

They stood around a gigantic man, who began to speak.

First off, I’ll introduce myself. I am your instructor for the first year, Aldo. I don’t care who you are or from where you came. Either way, be prepared to train until you can stand on your own two legs.

Aldo surveyed the students that encircled him.

He was surrounded by 20 nervous faces, students ranging from 12 years old to 16 years old.

Since it was the freshmen’s first class, and he wanted to see their real ability, he wouldn’t be lecturing, and everybody was swallowed by the atmosphere. [1]

He looked at the class register in his left hand.

The register contained all 20 names listed, but rather than their given names, their full names were listed. [2]

Within Knight School, one was not allowed to use their family name, or call themselves acquaintances of the house, the school didn't care about the students' origins.

However, the faculty was an exception, and so such a list was prepared.

Scanning the list, Aldo singled out two names from the list.

Looking up from the list, he once again looked at the students.

"First, I want to see your ability. divide yourselves into groups of two."

At his words, the students stood by their partners, promptly forming pairs.

'As I thought, it turned out like that.'

Seeing the course of events, Aldo gave a slight nod,

As he had expected, the two students he noted were the last ones remaining unpaired.

Though they were standing idly to the edges of the group, the other students merely avoided them, and in the end nobody partnered up with them.

One of those students was Knight Cadet Wynn.

Having entered school for four times, and being of lowly origins, he was a boy with an unusual background.[3]

And the other person was a female student — Knight Cadet Cornelia[4]

Among the students, those two stood out.

The reason being that they were both at least two years older than the other

students.

At sixteen, they just barely met the age requirement of enrolling.

Since most of the students were between 12 and 14 years old, their ages would obviously stand out.

It was natural for the other students to avoid those two.

Moreover, Knight Cadet Wynn's reputation as a four-time repeater may have influenced their actions.

In the end, the way the students divided themselves turned out as Aldo had expected.[5]

"Yosh, the pairs should spread out, so that I can see your individual abilities. Show me both martial arts and magic. Each partner should take enough distance from each other."

The students spread out in the practice field.

Among the students, Aldo especially observed Wynn and Cornelia, while crossing his arms.

'Well, whether they have good or bad intentions, the other noble cadets' treatment should push them to do better.[6]

After confirming that there are ten pairs, Aldo issued orders with a clear voice that had been tempered by many battles as a knight.

"Yosh, First off,"

With this, the Knight Cadets' first class in Knight School began.

To the left of the group fanned out before Aldo, there Wynn stood. [7]
Compared to every other student, he was one or two heads taller.
Of course, being two years older than them also didn't help.

"First, I want to see your ability. divide yourselves into groups of two."

At Aldo's words, the class began to make pairs, and Wynn also called out to a few people. However...[8]

"Umm..."

When he called out to one of them, the student would hurriedly flee, and partner up with somebody else.

Apart from the age difference, the already paired students were whispering behind his back.

Since none of the gazes directed at him contained favourable impressions, it seemed that they all knew Wynn's background as a four-time-repeater and commoner.

'I've had it...'[9]

Since there were twenty students, ten pairs would need to be made.

Hence, nobody should be left out.

If it ends up like that, then he would just find somebody who was wandering around aimlessly alone— Even if he made a pair in that way, he didn't know if they would enjoy it.[10]

Since he wouldn't get a partner without talking, he first searched the students around him. [11]

'As for somebody who is the same age...'

Wynn spotted a girl in a similar situation.

'It would be better if it were a male partner, but it can't be helped.'

"Ano, excuse me."

He approached her, and called out to her.

"If you're alone, would you like to form a pair with me?"

"Ah, yes. I would be happy to, if that's fine with you."

The girl smiled, feeling relieved.

"That's great. My name is Wynn."

"I'm Cornelia. Please take care of me." [12]

It seemed that the girl named Cornelia did not know about Wynn's circumstances.

Rather, it seemed to Wynn that she was also avoided by the other classmates.

Her looks were not ugly.

With shoulder-length pale blonde hair, good looks, rather than a beautiful woman, she would probably be described as lovely. [13]

For this reason, Wynn thought that it was strange that she hadn't been called out.

Perhaps, Wynn thought, the reason she was avoided was that she was older than the rest.

Following the instructor's directions, Wynn followed her, moving from their location, but, for some reason, Leticia's figure overlapped with hers, and he stopped paying attention. [14]

'Leti.'

While he walked, he recalled the morning's events when he left Leticia.

He had suddenly lost his cool, and he regretted it.

He was aware that he had acted harshly.

He selfishly distanced himself, even though her attitude after revealing that she was the Brave didn't change.[15]

Even so....

If he thought about how he should act around Leticia, he couldn't think of what was best for her.

She was the "Brave", and the "Third Daughter of a Duke".

'There has to be an appropriate partner fitting those titles.'[16]

'Either way, it wouldn't be good if I hung around her.'

"Umm..."

‘Come to think of it, I also left Locke behind at that place, but I have to apologize to him tonight at the dorm.’

“Ahem!”

“Oops...”

Turning his head, he saw Cornelia pulling at Wynn’s right sleeve.

“Mou, don’t you think we’ve taken enough distance?”

While he was deep in thought, they had already walked far enough from other pairs to spar freely.

It seemed that they were now the furthest group from instructor Aldo.

“Ah, yeah.”

They stood, waiting for the instructor’s directions, and soon after, Aldo raised his right hand.

“Yosh, first is the one on one mock battle observation!”[17]

Although they were so far away, Aldo’s voice reached where Wynn and Cornelia stood.

“Today, no special restrictions were prepared. Fight freely. Only, do not inflict

grave injuries on your opponent! Well then, Begin!”

Wynn drew his sword when the instructor signaled the beginning.

The the edges of the swords used for training were dulled.

He gripped his sword while observing Cornelia, who had drawn her sword and began chanting her magic.

“Strengthen me!”

She was instantly wrapped in a faint light.

It was the most basic spell of the Enhancement System Magic, Strengthening Magic.[18]

Among the other students scattered across the field, it wasn’t only Cornelia who was wrapped in a light.

Only Wynn was the exception.

“Are you not going to use magic?”

Cornelia was doubtful of Wynn, who didn’t chant magic.

Using Strengthening Magic to increase speed and strength was the foundation of a knight’s combat style.

In spite of this, Wynn, who invited her to pair up, only calmly held his sword.

“Un, Don’t mind me. When you’re ready.”

“If you say so...!”

She stopped hesitating.

While calling out, Cornelia kicked the ground, springing towards Wynn.

The difference in strength between somebody strengthened by magic and somebody who is not was like the difference between an adult and a child.

Closing the distance, she thrust her sword at Wynn.

However —

At the same time Cornelia leapt, Wynn also leapt forward.

‘It can’t be!? Fast!’[19]

At about the same time — No, Cornelia was quicker— despite this, Wynn closed the distance faster than her.

Before Cornelia could think, Wynn had taken the initiative.

With a horizontal slash, his sword locked with hers.

Then, Wynn was able to gradually push Cornelia back.

To Cornelia, it seemed unlikely that Wynn had used strengthening magic.

That meant that his speed was his own ability.

Deciding to power through the resistance, Wynn pushed aside the sword with a burst of strength.

At the moment Cornelia lost her balance, Wynn leapt back.

Cornelia immediately fixed her stance and prepared to attack, but at the next moment, Wynn closed the distance and attacked again.

Without being able to react to his speed —

“Ah...”

Her sword had been sent flying to the ground.

Cornelia looked at Wynn with amazement.

Wynn took one step, two steps backwards, and lightly sheathed the sword in his right hand.

It was so sudden, she was unable to believe it.

Cornelia didn't think that she excelled compared to the other students.

No, rather, she believed that compared to the others, she was slightly weaker.

However, she didn't think that she would lose to an unstrengthened person.

Especially that slash that disarmed her.

Far from being able to react, she was unable to see the sword's movements.

‘Why is this person on the cadet level? Couldn't he actually be an instructor?’

She looked at Wynn with suspicious eyes.

“Ah, well, sorry. Though I intended to aim at only the sword, did I hurt you?”

Misunderstanding her gaze, Wynn worriedly asked her.

With enough strength to leave both her hands numb, she couldn't accept this

kind of defeat within the school.(TL: guessy, and kinda important to character development. Read with a pinch of salt.) [20]

Without responding to Wynn's question, Cornelia picked up her sword.

As she picked it up, she saw that the other students were still fighting.

At the moment, only Cornelia and Wynn's group had finished their spar.[21]

"Umm, If you would like, we could have another match?"

The other students had not yet finished.

There was still time left.

'There is an overwhelming difference between our abilities.'

'Wynn's abilities are definitely not on the level of a cadet.'

'In that case, then I want to test my full abilities.'

"Yes please. I would like a rematch." [22]

Wynn once again prepared his sword.

From there, he stopped moving, seeming to wait for Cornelia to chant strengthening magic once again.

'If that's the case...'

"Strengthen me!"

She once again cast strengthening magic.

But that wasn't all.

“I, who understands the flame and the sword, show on my blade!” I must find my inner Chuuni to make a cool chant... not yet... Any WN suggestions with cool chants to reference (and more to my reading list)?

The blade became wrapped in red flames.

“Enhancement magic's ‘Enchant’!?”[23]

Wynn raised his voice in surprise upon seeing a magic rarely used in Knight School.

‘That's not all!’

“I, who understands the way of humanity, bind him!” More chants... 「我、人の理を知りて彼の者を戒める縛鎖を放つ！」

“Ugh!”

Now, his swift movements felt heavier.

‘Enchant’ was a magic in the Enhancement System.

The Enhancement magic system involved strengthening the caster's body, or magically enhancing other objects and people. [24]

However, few knights liked to practice enhancement magic.

First of all, the effective duration of enhancement magic was short.

At the longest, it lasted 10 minutes.

Engraving magic words onto the blade of the sword made the blade a permanent magic tool, but it would be too long-lasting for a short battle. [25]

Enhancement magic could also be used to strengthen others, but that also has cons.

Compared to using it on oneself, the effectiveness of strengthening magic was 3-5 times weaker when used on other people.

Even if the targeted person was willing, their body would still unconsciously resist the effects.

Since the town's adventurers did not have enough time to study both magic and swordsmanship, and not many nobles and wealthy people favored Enhancement magic, there were few experts.

Therefore —

Although it was impractical on the battlefield, it is effective in a one on one battle.

Holding up her flaming sword, Cornelia once again attacked Wynn.

AN: Since it was long, I cut it here.

Is the explanation of magic here good?

Sorry for the poor explanation.

Chapter 11: First Class ②

(AN:Continued from last time...)[1]

‘I’m not giving him the initiative this time, I’ll take the first move!’

Cornelia swung the sword wrapped in flames.

As expected, Wynn didn’t plan on receiving the brunt of the blow, but rather repel it, but his sword loudly collided. [2]

Wynn’s stance was broken.

Unlike the previous time, Cornelia was the one chasing Wynn.

The magic 《Binding Chains》 had taken effect. [3]

Cornelia stepped forward, aiming a stab at his chest.

Holding his sword with only his right hand, Wynn deflected the stab while kicking the ground to gain distance.

Wynn felt the force of the impacts each time Cornelia attacked..

Each of Cornelia’s blows were heavy.

Even though they were using longswords of similar sizes, Cornelia’s sword strikes were as heavy as if she were using a greatsword.

His unreinforced sword would break if he continued to take the blows.

The flames around the blade were also a problem.

If they locked swords, Wynn would be burnt by the heat.

Since those flames didn’t affect the caster, Cornelia didn’t feel the heat.

Compared to Cornelia, who was strengthened by strengthening magic, Wynn

was at a disadvantage.

Certain of her advantage, Cornelia continued her assault.

She made successive slashes.

As if he were dancing, Wynn dodged and parried all of the blows.

With his movements restricted, and at the same time, affected by the heat, Wynn concentrated on defending without being able to consider a counterattack.

He thought that they would continue to exchange blows like this.[4]

However, Cornelia's offensive stopped for a moment.

Her stamina was exhausted by having to maintain the continuous assault.

Cornelia's face distorted in a strained expression, she lifted her head to take a deep breath.

Seeing that moment's opportunity, Wynn immediately closed the distance.

With a low stance as if he were crawling, he rushed forward and thrust the tip of the sword at her neck.

At seeing this, Cornelia's body became weak, and Wynn slowly withdrew the sword.

"It is my complete and utter defeat..."

"Your flame enchantment magic was new to me. It was a valuable experience for me."

Wynn extended his right hand, and Cornelia accepted the handshake.

“To think you only beat me with sword skills. On the second match, were you waiting for me to run out of stamina?”

“I am confident in my endurance. However, I had no breathing room. My movements were restricted by magic. I had seen adventurers use it before, but after the first blow destroyed my stance, if the next attack were a little bit stronger, I would have lost.”

Cornelia let out a slight smile.

“I can’t believe that you’re a cadet like me. I would be surprised if you were an instructor. Wouldn’t you be stronger than a regular knight if you used magic?”

However —

“No, well, I...”

Wynn’s face suddenly darkened, and Cornelia realized she touched a sensitive topic.

“I cannot use magic. I have no talent for it.”

“Talent...”

“That’s why, I have to train so that I won’t be defeated by anybody while only using the sword. No matter how much I practice, I can’t use magic. Moreover,

people can never surpass their limits. However –” [5]

Wynn gripped the sword on his waist.

“Since many people win without having to practice, I could win against those dependent on magic”[6]

His previous expression vanished, and the light of determination shone in his eyes.

At his words, Cornelia was amazed.

Despite being the same age as her, this boy always forged ahead.

After those solemn words, Wynn gave a gentle smile.

“However, I’ve already failed the selection test three times. It seems that we should return to our places.”[7]

He saw that the other students had begun to return to their original places.

She had heard the story of his failing three times, but...

Cornelia watched Wynn’s retreating figure.

Before sparring with him, she didn’t believe any of the rumors of him being a failure.

‘I see... That is the rumored Master of the Brave, Wynn Byrd.’

The Knight School Instructor Aldo looked at Wynn and Cornelia, who were among the students that had regrouped.

From the beginning of the mock battles, Aldo observed their distant spar, gazing steadily at Wynn and Cornelia. [8]

Originally, he didn't look over everybody evenly, only heeding the few rumored students.

It was strange to not be worried.

At Aldo's signal, the mock battles started.

In line with the theory, the students all began to use strengthening magic.

Wynn's partner, Cornelia was no exception.

From Aldo's point of view, he confirmed a slight light from Cornelia.

Wynn, however, did not move.

Without casting magic, with slow motions, Wynn merely drew his sword.

However, those movements were much more polished than the other students, even the battle-tested Aldo thought it looked good.

Wynn stood motionlessly with the sword held calmly in his right hand.

He waited for Cornelia to finish strengthening herself with magic.

Wynn was not in Aldo's class last year.

He only knew about him from a report from the person who was his instructor last year,

According to the instructor's report, he wasn't able to use magic since didn't have enough magic power.

That was the truth.

Being unable to put magic into the practice sword, or use the lowest level

magic, his practical magic grades were rock-bottom. [9]

In reality, at the moment Cornelia finished strengthening herself with magic, Wynn's body contained no traces of magic.

However —

Despite Cornelia beginning to set up her sword earlier, Wynn closed the distance and attacked first.

Closing the distance instantly, he blocked Cornelia's slash. [10]

While they were locking swords, Wynn took the opportunity to disrupt her stance, then closed the distance again with a slash.

He aimed at Cornelia's sword with a slash, and her sword went flying out of her hands.

Cornelia's surprise was plainly visible.

She was probably unable to see Wynn's blade.

Even if it were Aldo, if he didn't use strengthening magic, he may not have been able to send the sword flying. [11]

The speed of his blade was overwhelming.[12]

'It was good that I saw it.' (Aldo)

If he paid attention to any of the other students, he would have missed it.

The level of the match was so much higher than the other students' matches,

and was over in a matter of moments.

‘Did those people realize that?’ [13]

‘It seems like they plan to have a rematch.’

Cornelia’s body was once again enveloped in light.

Unlike the previous time, however, her sword became wrapped in flames.

‘That was Enhancement System magic ‘Enchant’!’

Aldo widened his eyes.

It was unpopular in the Knight School, so he had few opportunities to see it.

But Cornelia did use that magic.

In the next instant, Wynn’s body was wrapped in a red light.

‘It seems that Wynn was affected by some kind of magic.’

Among the adventurers, who mainly fought monsters, few used this fighting style.[14]

Of course, there were also knight orders that fought monsters.

Against especially strong monsters, one would use weakening magic, but even that job would fall to the Imperial Court Magicians, so the Knights wouldn’t use it.

Cornelia, like Wynn, had a fighting style that deviated from the standard knight’s fighting style.

While Wynn was affected by some sort of weakening magic, Cornelia started her assault. [15]

When Wynn tried to repel Cornelia's sword, his stance was destroyed.

At this, Cornelia stabbed at him, which he warded off skillfully.

After that, Cornelia unleashed successive attacks, but at the moment she tired out, Wynn held his sword to Cornelia's throat, claiming victory.

At a glance, it seemed like Cornelia had the upper hand, Wynn's patient endurance eventually won out.

However, what impressed Aldo was not Wynn's victory, but his swordsmanship and agility — Even more monstrous though, was that it was the Brave's swordsmanship.

Those movements which seemed like a sword dance, reminded him of the time he had met the Brave.

Three years ago, while Aldo was stationed at a frontier Knight Order, he was on his way to subjugate a group of man-eating ogres.

There, he was able to see the form of Leticia the Brave.

At a certain village near the border...

There, scores of ogres attacked.

Aldo's knight order, upon receiving an urgent report, mobilized, but the scout platoon was unable to count the amount of ogres.

Even if the villagers were to abandon the village and escape, they would be overtaken and massacred.

Aldo's scout party's captain decided to stay in the village as a decoy in order to buy time for the villagers to escape.

Even then, the platoon numbered only ten people.

Ogres were, by nature, far stronger than humans, such that two or three knights would be needed against one of them.

Even if the knights stayed behind, the escaping villagers would be lucky to survive.

Nevertheless, in that remote village, there was only the hope of reinforcements arriving.

With their resolve to die, the knights persuaded the villagers to abandon the village, and while they prepared to fortify themselves, Leticia the Brave appeared.

Hearing of the impending Ogre attack, she had stopped by alone to help.

Telling the knights and the villagers that she would protect them all, she promptly stood outside the village, waiting for the ogres to attack.

At first, the knights were opposed to her fighting alone.

Even though she was the Brave, she was still a young girl.

The proud knights absolutely couldn't just watch the girl fight.

The scout platoon's captain approached Leticia.

However —

"I appreciate the sentiment, but I fight alone. Don't you have people you must protect?" [16]

She faced the crowd.

She saw anxious children, women, and elders.

The men who could fight had already died battling against the ogres, or were cooperating with the knights to fortify the village against the ogre's invasion.

Convinced that their duty was to protect, when the time came, they planned to fight with all their might.

However, Leticia smiled those who were about to argue.

"Don't worry. At the very least, I can buy time for everybody to escape."

With those words, Leticia exited the hastily fortified village.

'Thinking about it now. that smile clearly — clearly that smile showed that something had broken.'[17]

When the sun set, the forest came alive as ogres approached, one after another.

At the front, was an especially large ogre.

It was most likely the boss of the horde.

Leticia walked towards that ogre.

The weapon in her right hand was merely a sword.

At that time, the young girl around ten years old, whose height was similar to her sword, approached the three meter tall ogre.

Aldo, the knights, and the villagers were all behind her, watching her receding figure.

‘Why didn’t we detain her more strongly at the time?’

‘Though she rejected our offer to fight with her, I can’t just stand and watch,’ was what everybody thought.

Several ogres were commanded by the horde boss to rush her.

With those bulging muscles, and crude bludgeon as a weapon, humans would become mincemeat.

That atrocious weapon swung down towards Leticia — The unaffected Leticia continued to advance.

‘Ha?’

On the verge of screaming, they closed their eyes, expecting a tragedy, but they couldn’t believe what they saw. [18]

After a moment — The ogres’ arms, legs and neck fell off from their bodies, with blood spurting out.

Nobody could understand what had happened.

Meanwhile, Leticia continued to walk towards the horde’s center.

Despite that, the corpses ogres that stood before her were scattered over the ground.

It was a sight that utterly lacked common sense.

Among the scattered corpses of the ogres, Leticia's blurry figure was seen.

For no apparent reason, everybody shuddered.

Even though the knights were far away from her, they saw her massacring the ogres at an imperceptibly fast speed.

The knights were drenched in a cold sweat while watching this.

At the little girl spreading slaughter, the ogres tried to crush her to death by rushing her with overwhelming numbers.

However —

The blade slipped through the approaching ogres' club wielding arms, sending their arms flying, then returned to send heads flying.

She used the ogres who tried to attack from behind as a foothold to launch into the air, kicking off of their heads. After kicking off of the ogre's head, she attacked the ogre.

She was unstoppable. She didn't stop.

The little girl danced a Danse Macabre. [19]

Covered in blood, Leticia expressionlessly mowed down the ogres.

Then, among the ogre horde, she approached the one thought to be the horde boss, the one with the large physique.

Dropping into a low stance, she severed both its legs.

Slipping between its legs, she kicked the ground and burst forward.

Thus, she defeated the Ogre Leader.

The place became quiet.

Only, with a gaze unfitting of the battlefield, Leticia looked down at the ogre on the ground.

Flicking off the blood from the blade, slowly, lifting her head up, she looked at the surrounding ogres.

At that gaze, the ogres who only knew battle felt fear, and the disarranged ogres fled away from Leticia, away from the village.

Leticia the Brave had driven away a horde of ogres.

The village was saved.

However, among the knights and villagers, none were able to move or let out cheers of celebration.

The girl before them, they feared Leticia the Brave.

She had just massacred the ogres as if they were insects.

It was an unbelievable feat for a human being.

Since the villagers and knights felt fear, she glanced at the village for a moment, then turned away without looking back, leaving them there.

Until her companions arrived, she took not one step, then left when they arrived. [20]

Even now, Aldo remembered it distinctly.

Compared to the lovely Danse Macabre, the impression of her smile was fleeting.

Therefore, upon seeing Leticia's smile at yesterday's entrance ceremony, he felt relieved from the bottom of his heart.

Even she smiled like an ordinary human.

Meanwhile, he still felt a prick of anxiety.

Perhaps, to her, that fight may have been one of many battles.

She who had slipped through that ghastly battlefield, was now harmoniously walking in the Knight School.

Although Wynn's magic grades were poor, his abilities were certainly not on the level of a cadet.

In spite of this, rumor has it that he had failed the examination due to an eminent noble's will.

A noble who held great influence over the knight orders.

If, by chance, the noble's unjust intentions became known —

Most likely, many injustices have been performed up until now.

Using money to determine the examination results would be merely the tip of the iceberg.

Using his influence, he would obstruct people that he didn't like from

becoming a knight. This surely affected people other than Wynn in the past.

Up until now, such things went well.

However, this time, the target was that Wynn Byrd.

He was the rumored Master of the Brave.

When the truth came out, Leticia the Brave would take action.

With her unbelievable strength, she would oppose the Empire.

On top of being the Brave, she was also a duke's daughter in the line of succession for the throne.

She was the Empire's most important noble.

'It probably wouldn't go that far, but...'

Even Aldo, who became a teacher when he returned from the frontier, he was dumbfounded by the amount of injustices that were overlooked.

As somebody who became a knight from a soldier, he resented the Knight School's lax, lukewarm attitude.

Nevertheless, the test results were practically determined by bribery.

Aldo made his training strict as a minimal sign of resistance.

From now on though, the status quo might change.

This is because the person who Leticia the Brave revered as her master was Wynn Byrd.

'He became my student.'

'What qualities does he possess, that that Brave adores him so?'

This intrigued Aldo.

Chapter 12: Leticia's thoughts

AN: Since the first half is explanation, skipping it is fine. (TL: I don't really agree? World building, and magic explanation...)

Since Simurgh Knight School was a repurposed palace, the ceilings were tall, and the walls and pillars exuded an air of solemnity.

The auditorium was once used as a meeting place for the imperial bureaucrats and the knight order. From the raised platform, chairs and desks were arranged in a fan-like formation, with the seats higher up they get closer to the back.

When it was a palace, many tactics and strategies were discussed there.

Now, instead of officers and executives in those seats, there sat students striving for knowledge.

That day, the first lecture of the school year, about the foundations of magic usage, was to be held.

Among the freshmen, however, were many upperclassmen who were apprentice knights. [1]

Seats already filled, there were many students standing.

Their objective was the girl on the stage.

Generals and officers once stood there, but as a school, instructors now stood there.

The one who was standing there was the girl who was the most famous person in the world: Leticia.

She had asked the instructors for the opportunity to stand there.

“The most important thing when using magic, no matter how fast you cast it, you must have a clear image in mind.”

She wore a soft smile, and her pleasant voice resounded throughout the auditorium.

“I believe that most of you have learned magic before you enrolled, but I want to demonstrate and review here.” [2]

When the instructor originally responsible for the class nodded at her from below the stage, Leticia held out her right hand

“I, who has understood the way of fire, light up!”

A small candle-like flame appeared on Leticia’s fingertip.

“This is one of the most basic spells of the Physics System magic, “Light”. The second part of the incantation: “...who has understood the way of fire...” shows that the caster has in mind his understanding of fire... including heat, light, color, form, and so on. These are the typical magic words in most cases of magic spells. Now, I will focus magic power into the spell.”

The flame on Leticia’s index finger grew to be as big as a head.

“... Wow...” [3]

Those words escaped from the mouth of somebody among the students. Beginning with that word, sighs of wonder and sounds of praise were heard.

The flames flickered quicker and quicker.

She had demonstrated a perfect control of her magic power.

“If you use less magic power, then the magic’s effectiveness also decreases.”

In a moment, the flame shrunk from the size of a head to the size of Leticia’s fist.

“Then, to end the spell, if you stop supplying magic power, the spell will extinguish.”

Waving her hand, the flame disappeared.

“Like this, the effectiveness of magic can be changed by controlling the amount of magic power used. It can’t be helped that related to magical ability, is decided at birth. However, speed of invocation of magic power can be increased through training. Magical combat is not only decided by magical ability. Please keep in mind that a magic’s efficacy is also greatly influenced by speed of invocation.”

The students listened to her earnest words and took notes.

“Now, let’s move to the next stage — “I, who has understood the way of fire, Fireball!”

This time, a spherical flame the size of a head appeared atop Leticia’s palm.

“The difference just now lies in the third part of the incantation. The caster

changed the image, and the magic materializes accordingly. What is important here, is that if one doesn't thoroughly understand the image, the magic will fail. If one does not understand the phenomenon, even if there is an image, it will not materialize."

Leticia turned her right palm upwards, holding it overhead.

At the same time, with a 'Bon!' sound, the fireball grew to twice its size.

"Now, the same amount of magic that was used to grow the torch magic was put into the fireball. If ten units of magic power were used for the spell, and ten more was added, then the effectiveness would be the equivalent of twenty units of magic power. If twenty units were used in the spell, and ten were added, you would end up with the effectiveness of thirty units of available magic. Does everybody understand? Since magic is directly proportional to the amount of magic power inputted, it is important to choose the magic. Naturally, when you use higher effectiveness magic, it takes longer to collect magic power, so one must use magic according to the situation. These concepts are the foundations of magic." [4]

Once again, Leticia extinguished the flame, then bowed.

The sound of applause arose, filling the auditorium.

"Incredible~!"

"Kyaa, Leticia-samaaa!"

The cheers and applause made the auditorium tremble.

With a slight smile and a deep bow, she descended from the stage.

Her gaze drifted to the window of the auditorium, where the garden

remodeled into a practice field was.

There, a freshmen exclusive practical skills class was taking place.

Though she couldn't see him clearly, Wynn should still be in class swinging his sword.

For a moment, her feet stopped, but as if it were nothing, Leticia slowly made her way to the deepest part of the auditorium and sat down.

As Leticia left the stage, the original instructor rose to the stage, giving a supplementary explanation to Leticia's demonstration.

Due to this, the previously noisy auditorium returned to silence.

However, rather than the instructor's explanation, the students paid attention to Leticia, who sat in the back. [5]

Meanwhile, Leticia ignored the instructor's lecture, looking out the window.

She looked towards the practical skills class, while thinking of Wynn, who was among those students.

"Sorry, Leti... Leticia...-sama, Locke. I'll go on ahead."

The rift had opened up four years ago.

Before, it was physical distance, but now, their positions distanced Wynn and her.

A sigh leaked out.

(Back then, I didn't have to worry about such things...)

When they were young, Leticia would spend practically the whole day by Wynn's side.

It was due to the oracle's proclamation, that miraculously, suddenly, her surroundings conveniently set her up as the Brave, and she was dragged out

from her most comfortable place. [6]

“Leticia, won’t you show us your power?”

The day Leticia was pronounced the Brave, her father, Duke Mavis, asked her to show him her power.

After having been ignored by her parents, siblings, and her surroundings, for the first time in her life, they held expectations for her.

As a naive ten year old, nobody would blame her for being excited.

She used strengthening magic with all her strength.

At the knight who had his sword prepared, she took a step and faced him.

With tremendous speed, she struck at the sword of the defending knight.

One bout was all it took.

Leticia swung her sword, and the knight’s sword flew from his hands.

As the sword fell to the ground, Leticia’s knight opponent also fell over.

An ominous silence fell, due to everyone being shocked at the overwhelming strength she showed, until they finally came to their senses.

“O, Oh, Wonderful, Leticia. You are the pride of the Mavis House.”[7]

“Your mother is also very happy.”

Somehow squeezing out a sound, her parents spoke.

Leticia turned around with an elated smile.

However, contrary to the words, the crowd wore terrified expressions.

Even her parents. Similarly, her siblings, the servants, the Knight Order staffers, and clergy wore smiles and praised her strength, but their pupil

betrayed their fear. [8]

Her opponent, who was a prominent knight officer in the Knight Order, was on the ground, sweating a lot, and his eyes looked at Leticia with fear.

That day on, Leticia's environment changed drastically, and she would experience the changes many times.

She understood that.

No matter how many people she rescues, no matter how many towns and cities she saves, no matter how many countries she helps, people would never accept her incomprehensible existence.

Thus, Wynn who had cared so much for her, became an indispensable existence to her.

Ever since she was a child, he was the only one that truly accepted her as she was.

Wynn might not have noticed.

He did not play with the other children.

But wouldn't people envy those who showed more talent than them, or otherwise reject the fact?

Many people she had met on her journey were like that.

Among them, only he didn't envy her, nor avoid her.

"Leti is amazing. You have become an amazing knight!"

Even before becoming the Brave, after being shown talents much higher than his, rather than envy, he faced her with a gaze of honest praise.

How amazing that was for her.

She realized this after she became the Brave.

She thought that she was no match for him.

Therefore, she was shocked.

She, who was the “Brave” and “Duke’s Third Daughter”, with a status she didn’t want, didn’t expect that he would distance himself—

Perhaps he thought that he was not suitable to be by Leticia’s side, the thought had never occurred to her. [9]

Not as “Brave”, not as “Duke’s Daughter”, not as a tool, not as an enemy, of all the people in the world, she wanted to be seen by Wynn as a person.

She couldn’t bear parting with that person.

‘Even if the rest of the world believes he is unsuitable for her , I will acknowledge him.’

Although he hadn’t been at school for long, he was put in a cruel, hostile environment.

The many students would backbite him, scorn him.

She heard from Locke, that he felt that the examinations were somehow unfair.

If that were true...

Leticia slowly closed her eyes, hid her face from the surroundings, and smiled. They would regret having made enemies of her.[10]

AN: Sorry for the poor magic explanation.

Chapter 13: Anticipation

The man rose from the ebony desk, and slowly walked towards the window.

A month after the entrance ceremony, he finally had a moment's rest from work.

He gazed at the practice field through the window.

There, the students who aspired to become knights spent their time.

However, immediately after the entrance ceremony, of the people found in the practice field, the figure of students were missing.

It was a common spectacle in recent years.

Since the new students hadn't gotten used to the atmosphere yet, any students that did enter were extremely diligent, and so a month passed like this. [1]

The man let out a deep sigh.

It had been three years since he had returned from the front lines to the capital.

Now, the administrative position he was given was a high position in its own way, but he was completely unable to contribute to the war effort.

In essence, it was a demotion.

While on duty in a village on the front lines, the man had punished a knight who was about to rape a young girl, and was sent back to the capital as a result.

Afterwards, he learned that the rapist knight belonged to a long line of prominent nobles.[2]

The demotion was so blatant, that he felt irritated, but his head had begun to whiten. The subordinate he had trained was forced to agree to such a foolish action. [3]

However, the reality he saw here was unbelievable to he who had risked his life on the front lines.

Various injustices including factional disputes, betrayal, even bribery, and embezzlement were rampant throughout.

The students of the Knight School who would shoulder the imperial army soon were no exception, especially the the ones who should have been model students, the noble children, were the ones who took the initiative to commit such injustices.

What was frightening, was that those very people would one day govern the entire knight order.

No, The current Knight Order's leaders were also the same.

The students were merely imitating their parents.

He wondered how his other comrades from the front lines saw the reality of the capital.

According to orders to the distant front lines from the capital, many knights and soldiers fought to the death.

He was a good battle strategist, but even he couldn't guarantee zero victims.

He had seen many lives end.

Even those who cared for the sick died. [4]

On the other hand, those who gave the orders that caused the deaths were there surrounded by their family members, living lives of luxury.

But that didn't mean that they were completely rotten.

They understood that logistics were important.

If they fulfilled their work without fail, some of their decadence would be ignorable.

However, the supplies, food and money that was to be sent to the front lines were embezzled by them, and the supplies that arrived were always insufficient, and those on the battlefield had no choice but to endure it.

Of course, before his eyes in the practice field, there were students who trained all day, intending to truly protect the empire as knights.

Those who thought that way were few, and they were of low status, and did not remain in the capital.

They were sent to the front lines.

Officially, it was the high achievers that were left in the capital, but in reality, bribery was able to determine the grades.

This was no good.

The empire had no future like this.

While the demon lord existed, it was a threat to all those living, and it was better while it existed. [5]

Throughout the whole continent, all the countries and races were united to oppose the threat.

However, now that the threat was removed, fights between people and nations came to the forefront yet again.

In fact, information was obtained stating that the neighboring country had planned to begin militarizing.

When the country would invade was unknown.

‘Humans, I believe, are truly greedy beyond help.’

‘Despite the fact that they had been companions united against a common enemy just the other day, the moment the menace of the demon lord disappeared, beings of the same race began to fight each other.’

‘That reminds me —’

‘That girl, who became the Brave...’

‘When I heard that she would be enrolling as a scholarship student, I was surprised.’

He had seen the Brave three years ago at the frontier — he was the commander of the platoon that had moved against the ogres about to overrun a village — it became his last battle.

Though he sent a scout platoon, the platoon’s estimates of the size of the ogre horde exceeded expectations, he had resigned himself to the loss of the scout platoon and the village.

However, what they saw when they arrived was — there, countless ogre corpses lay, standing in the middle was a girl with a cold gaze.

The girl was surrounded by the gazes of the scout platoon knights and the villagers.

At the same time that he arrived, her companions arrived, and without a word, they departed.

According to the scout platoon’s report, and the villager’s words, he was able to find out that the girl was the Brave, Leticia von Mavis, and he was unable to forget that scene

The cold gaze the Brave showed.

The feelings of fear that coursed through the villagers — they were directed at she who had saved the village, the Brave.[6]

‘Unrewarded, without being given even a word of praise, solely given looks of fear, what sort of mental state could she be experiencing?’

‘By all rights, she was still at the age where she should be playing around happily.’

‘But she wasn’t allowed to do so.’

‘Feared by those she protected, despite being rejected, why did she continue to fight on?’

A knock on the door brought him out of those thoughts.

“It’s open. Please come in.”

“Yes sir! Excuse me.”

The person who entered the room was his former subordinate, with whom he had met again when he returned to the capital.

That man returned to the capital a short while before he did.

“Is the plan going well?”

“I believe things are going as you expected, sir.”

“Is that so...”

The man leaned into his chair and closed his eyes.

“Many uninvolved people will be involved in the end, huh...”

“Sir...”

Some fatigue dwelled in the words he muttered with a deep sigh.

“The plan, can we afford to reconsider it again? Now, the Brave is in the school. If she—”

“There is no time for that.”

The man interrupted his subordinate’s worried words.

“She might make a move, we do not know. She probably is not one to tolerate injustice, and she has enough power. However!” [7]

With those strong words, the man raised his head.

At those eyes filled with vigor, his subordinate shrunk back.

Even if he had retired from active duty, they were eyes of a knight who had survived for years on the battlefield.

“I do not plan to let the Brave shoulder the burden of our Knight Order’s problems. This is our problem.”

Originally, the demon lord was also supposed to be the knight order’s problem.

Instead, the fate of the world was entrusted to a young girl.

He still felt the anger at his own worthlessness.

Furthermore, he couldn’t possibly shame himself more by troubling others.

“Sir, if you would even go this far, then there is nothing more to be said. Now, the plan is beginning to be put into motion. Lastly, we...”

“Such a stupid matter.”

He laughed off the subordinate’s proposal.

“I am the commander. Your commander. It is the commander’s responsibility to see through the plan to the end.”

At those words, the subordinate took a deep bow, and left adroitly.

The man saw him off, and in the room alone, he muttered to himself.

“Oh, Brave. You shouldn’t have returned to this country. This country is rotten. Therefore, before you turn on the country, I will act first.”

“Father.”

“Oh, Jade. How goes your matters?” [8]

“There are no problems. With the money I obtained, I can use the group as I please.”[9]

They were at the Cliffdorf House’s estate in the Imperial Capital.

The head of the household, Welt, and his son, Jade, were having a meal together.[10]

The table was filled with decadent food— food that those on the front lines would never taste.

While enjoying the cuisine and drinking first class wine, Welt began to speak.

“Have you noticed the movements around here recently?”

“Yes. According to the spies, the plan has not changed, and they will move as planned.”

“Is that so.”

With those words, Welt nodded with satisfaction, and once more drank his wine. [11]

“I must say, Father. It is a splendid plan. Using that man’s plan, it is possible to deal a blow on the imperial household.”

“Hmm. That’s because he had just returned from the battlefield. The war in the capital is similar to the war on the front lines, it uses not only brute strength, I know.”

Welt had already been aware of the dissident faction of the Knight Order.

He had not risen to the top of the Knight Order for show.

If he exercised his influence, he would be able to promptly suppress them, but he wanted to use the plan to deal a blow against the imperial household.

“But, Is it alright? Even if we kill?”[12]

“There is no problem. The Brave has now caught my interest.”

Jade smiled faintly.

“It is surely regrettable, but they can’t compare to the Brave.”[13]

“As for that matter, is it going well with you? Can you obtain the Brave?”

“As we had said before, the Brave is merely a little girl after all.[14]
Furthermore, she is inexperienced in high society. Please leave it to me.”

Jade held up his glass, lightly tapping his father’s glass.

A faint clink was heard. [15]

Tipping his glass, Jade drank the wine while thinking about the Brave.

‘She certainly is a beautiful maiden. She is suitable to be my partner.’ [16]

‘Only she has the air of nobility.’[17]

‘That overwhelming presence.’

‘That unparalleled beauty.’

‘Although I thought that whether a wife was ugly or beautiful didn’t matter,
after seeing her figure, I just had to have her.’[18]

‘I want to control that girl.’

‘Which reminds me... The Brave is especially close to that plebeian Wynn, or
so I heard...’

‘Perfect.’

‘There should be that apprentice knight who is close to that plebeian.’

‘Using him, I will be able to deal with that annoying plebeian bastard.’

‘I’ll first kill all the pests before they multiply.’

Chapter 14: Periodic Subjugation Mission

The Knight School students who met the qualifications to become apprentice knights receive missions from the Knight Order.

The regular subjugation missions are one of them.

They were tasked with subjugating low level monsters such as goblins, orcs and apparitions in the mountain district's forests.

With the Demon Lord defeated by the Brave, high ranked demons and monsters gone, much of the damage was caused by the unrelated low-level monsters.

For that reason, the Knight Order undertakes a biannual subjugation mission.

The mission was perfect for the new apprentice knights to gain actual combat experience.

This year, Knight Apprentice Locke Marine was directed to participate in the mission.

“...And that's how it is. Wynn, please come with me.”

“I don't know what you mean by 'And that's how it is.', but I have work, and I'm not an apprentice knight, you know? ”

Returning to the room in high spirits, Locke declared to Wynn, who had returned earlier,

“With this subjugation mission[1], Doesn't it take a month? What would I do about class!?”

“At most, won’t your grade drop a bit? Wouldn’t real combat experience on the mission be more useful training?”

“That is true, but...”

Anyways, it was his fourth year here.

In his classes, he would be able to earn back some points on the tests.

Tossing his coat onto the bed, and picking up the sword leaning on the wall, Locke sat on the floor.

The sword in his hand wasn’t the normal practice sword that Wynn used everyday, but a standard Imperial Knight’s sword.

On the blade, the magic words were inscribed. It was the standard magic blade issued by the imperial knight order used against monsters.

Whether it be goblins, kobolds, or wild animals turned into demonic beasts by miasma, they multiply like humans and animals. [2]

Since the monster spawn have physical bodies, using normal weapons to attack it is enough.

However, mid to high rank demons born from the demon lord and elite demons, since they possessed a miasma nucleus in their core, couldn’t be damaged by physical means.[3]

The only way to damage them is by using magic, or using magic-power reinforced weapons.

For this reason, the humanity’s age-old weapons such as the bow and other wooden weapons were ineffective.[4]

Though there was Enhancement Magic, it wasn’t efficient to enhance each arrow one by one, and there was also the problem of the effective time of enhancement magic.

Therefore, though there was a way to inscribe the words directly onto the blade, the blade would need a specially refined steel to allow it to conduct magic energy well.

Since there are long gaps between combat, most people prefer easy to use weapons, so the common spears couldn't hold magic words.[5]

Even though there were metal spears created, the weight, cost and other problems, prevented it from becoming popular.

Of course, powerful magic weapons existed in myths, but...

The standard imperial knight sword merely had its sharpness magically enhanced, and the magic blade's core was made of the cheapest materials, the country does not give it out unless one is at least an apprentice knight.

Locke treated his yet unused sword very carefully.

Even now, while Locke polished his sword with a loose expression, Wynn gazed at him with an envious expression.

The sword that he was granted, after all, was the first step to achieving his aspirations of becoming a knight.

"But my magical ability is practically nonexistent, so I want to at least make up for it in martial arts class? Even then, I also want to earn my living expenses, so I can't skip work."

Even now, Wynn worked at the Wataridori Pavilion after class.

He was the main waiter in the peak hours of the evening, so if he were suddenly absent for a long period of time, Hanna would no doubt start to complain.

At worst, he would be fired.

Even if he weren't fired, the the tuition was expensive.

Apart from working at the Wataridori Pavilion, Wynn would use the breaks to

do odd jobs and simple requests at the adventurer's guild, so the mission would prevent him from taking those jobs.

However...

"Ah, but isn't it fine if you don't worry about the money?"

Locke stopped his hand that was polishing the blade, gave a satisfied nod at the blade's gleam, and returned it to its sheath.

"Perhaps, within a few days, I think a directive will also arrive for you?"

"Huh? Why?"

"Because, a person expected to participate in the mission was named Wynn"[6]

"Why!?"

He was sure that the Knight Order only selected knight cadets above a certain ability, and then sent the mission dispatch directive.

Even as a cadet, official missions from the Knight Order, or the Empire, they would receive a reward even if they weren't apprentice knights.

If that were the case, then Wynn's monetary qualms would be nonexistent, and since it would be an official directive, he would have no choice but to quit working for a while.

Nonetheless...

“Up until now, I have never went on this sort of mission.”

“Isn’t that proof that their evaluation of you has improved?”

The students that attended the Knight School were of good blood.[7]

Among children of the aristocracy and the wealthy in the school, who possessed high magic power, Wynn had low magic power, so his evaluation was similarly low.

Since there were many of those who had risen ranks from being a soldier among the knights, not all the knights had strong magic power, but Wynn’s lack of magic power was a disadvantage to him in school.

“Is that so... then that would be good...”

Apart from his abysmal practical magic grades, his performance in his other classes was better than the nobles.

He took the classes seriously, even if it weren’t his fourth year. [8]

Even in close quarters combat, he had reached the point that he could fight evenly against strengthened opponents.

Locke thought that it was strange that Wynn hadn’t become an apprentice knight.

“Well, the people who see it, see it.” [9]

“Apart from me, won’t there be other participants?”

“I have a hunch on how many people will be there. However, Wynn, this mission, depending on circumstances, is a chance to become an apprentice

knight.”

His face breaking into a smile, Locke turned towards Wynn.

Even though one was a knight cadet, and the other is an apprentice knight, they were both students.

Despite the mission, there was also training, however...

“Since it is a real battle, if you achieve good results, it is a shortcut to becoming a knight!”

As Locke said, actual military accomplishments are the best achievements, after all. [10]

“I understand, but I should be careful to not be too reckless in my actions.”

The next day, the directive reached Wynn.

Just as Locke said, it was the dispatch order for the periodic subjugation mission. [11]

On the highway between Imperial Capital Simurgh and a nearby city Kurenado.[12]

Wynn, who was appointed to go on the subjugation mission, was among Locke and the other apprentice knights students, while several knights rode their horses ahead.

The platoon that was mixed among the inexperienced students were those stationed in the relatively safe surroundings of the imperial capital.

Thus, in a place far from the frontier, the knights organized small platoons to carry out the subjugation.[13]

The students that were participating numbered twenty, including Wynn.

In addition to the four knights dispatched from the Imperial Capital, six knights from the fort would make up the platoon.

With the horses in the lead, they marched forth on the highway.

As expected, unlike the nervous students, the knights maintained composed expressions.

While sometimes engaging in idle chatter, they advanced.

While staying in formation with Locke and his horse, Wynn looked ahead at the knights before him.

At the vanguard was Nigel, a knight of noble birth, and the captain of the platoon.

He seemed to be in his mid-thirties.

He had a tall and lean body, and wore a new suit of armor.

Beside him was a young knight riding alone on a horse, Jade.

For a son of high nobility to participate in this sort of mission was highly unusual.

Upon seeing his figure in the Knight School's plaza, Locke was very surprised.

"Oioi, why is Jade-sama participating? It's not like a dragon will appear..."

"Stop that... Don't say something so ominous." [14]

Why Locke blurted out those words, Wynn understood.

However, possibly because he participated, there were an unusually large amount of noble apprentice knights participating...

They were also wearing new suits of armor.

But strangely, they didn't talk to Jade, and Jade advanced all alone.

That he wasn't surrounded by his lackeys was strange.

Jade was a student, but in this mission, he was considered a knight.

'What sort of strings did he pull,' was Locke's negative assessment of him, but for the purposes of this he also held a grudging respect for him.[15]

Behind the two senior Knights, Jade merely looked ahead and rode his horse forward.

"Captain Nigel, though there are rumors of bandits appearing around here, there haven't been any attacks, have there?"

A student in front of Wynn called out.

"There are no bandits willing to risk attacking an armed group including us knights and students."

Nigel looked back, and answered the student's question.

"In the first place, the likes of bandits would aim for caravans possessing money. What would they gain from attacking an armed force?"

"Ah, that's right."

"Don't worry."

The two younger knights in their mid-twenties looked back at the anxious students, drew their swords, and held them in the air.

“Whether it be bandits or monsters, we just have to subjugate them, don’t we?”

At that, they pointed the swords at the smiling students.

“Don’t draw your sword recklessly, Irsu.”[16]

A stern and firm voice came from the back row.

It was a person who marched without talking to anybody, in the rearguard, Aldo.

Even Instructor Aldo was part of the platoon.

The instructors were also knights.

Unlike the other three people in the rearguard, wearing a worn suit of armor covered in scratches, he distinctly stood out among the other three people.

“This isn’t a game. Face forward, and lead the way carefully.”

At Aldo’s reprimand, Irsu clicked his tongue, and sheathed his sword.

“Is that the mindset of the battlefield, Aldo?”

Nigel turned around to glare at Aldo in the back.

“Your words are important, befitting of a veteran knight-dono who has returned from the front lines. However, Irsu drew his sword to encourage you everybody. To reprimand him like that, disregards my authority and exceeds yours.”

Looking down, Aldo said no more.

Seeing this, Nigel pat Irusu's shoulder with an unpleasant smile.

The young knight took a fleeting glance at Aldo, and smiled.

"What is it, so unpleasant..."

Riding beside Wynn, Cornelia whispered.

She was also picked for the mission as a knight cadet.

Two people, Wynn and Cornelia, were the only two knight cadet members on the mission.

Naturally she came to interact with Locke and Wynn.

Originally, she was avoided by the other students, so it was natural.

"Instructor is amazing. Since that person is a commoner, he must have done a meritorious deed on the front lines and became a knight. " [17]

Locke whispered back to Cornelia. [18]

"But don't bring those human relations into the conversation. It is a relief that Jade is quiet"

The discord between noble knight from the capital [19] and a commoner knight returning from the front lines was sometimes visible. Idiom? 見え隠れする。

Meanwhile, Jade merely remained silent, but since many of the other apprentice knights were also nobles, Nigel and Irusu's position was viewed

more favorably.

Upon seeing the Aldo who always yelled at them being on the other end of the stick in the argument, many students snickered.

Being somewhat related to the recent conversation, the student who talked with Nigel and Irusu appeared among the students.

Apart from those people, Wynn and the others were in front of Aldo, who was in the back.

Aldo was silent, and hadn't said a word since then.[20]

Marching on for a half an hour in somewhat unpleasant atmosphere, they saw a rough small stone fort in front of them.

It was the fort that would become the platoon's base.

Chapter 15: Night Before ①

The group arrived at the fort to spend a night preparing for the next day's expedition.

Instead of staying in the fort, they camped in the open space front of the fort, since the mission was also a training opportunity.

Although they had moved by horse up until now, the student's faces reflected their fatigue.

However, not one person laid down.

It was understandable.

Though they were a stone's throw away from the knights in the fort, nobody knew whether atrocious monsters lurked within the forest covered in shadows.

Of course, near the imperial capital, no powerful monsters existed, but while that was true, the fear had not faded.

Everybody understood that they had better lie down for a little rest for tomorrow's expedition, but the tension prevented their eyes from closing.

At the several campfires set up in the open space, acquaintances sat together.

The food had been provided by the fort, and the students ate to their heart's content, and passed their time as they pleased.

It was particularly noisy around several of the female apprentice knights.

In such a somber environment, to the men, they were refreshing existences.

If there are many boys seeking to be knights, regardless of family status, then there are also many girls who are aiming to become knights, of low status.

In many cases, they could be daughters of a family of knights.

The daughters would be able to interact with children of upper class nobles, with even a chance to marry into riches, so they actively socialized too.[1]

However, during military movement, they stood guard while the knights patrolled the surroundings, so there was no strange atmosphere. (TL: really unsure...)[2]

Even Cornelia was approached by a single male student, unlike usual.

It was unusual for her to be approached by a student.

Since she was even avoided by those of the same gender, Wynn, who had known her for at least a month, couldn't remember her being approached by somebody of the opposite gender.

She, Wynn and Locke were gathered around a fire, when an apprentice knight named Regin[3] suddenly approached her.

"Such amazing beauty. Your face, illuminated by the flames, looks exactly as if it had come out of a painting of the Goddess Anastasia-sama. To have met you in this place, it must be the work of god. How about it? Won't you come and talk with us over there?"

"I'm sorry."

She replied immediately.

Cornelia gazed at the campfire's flames as if entranced, and rejected Regin, who had knelt down and held his hand out in a theatrical manner, without even looking at his face.

"...Pu...ahaha...."

Locke's back curled, and his shoulders shook, but he was unable to resist bursting into laughter.

"Stop laughing!"

He didn't even consider the possibility that he would be immediately rejected.
[4]

Regin, who displayed a dumbstruck expression, shouted at the laughing Locke.

"I'm sorry."

Locke stopped laughing for a moment and imitated Cornelia's tone to apologize to Regin, then, being unable to endure it, he held his sides and burst out into uncontrollable laughter again.

"Shit, for the likes plebeians..."[5]

Regin, red-faced, glared at Locke, who was laughing, then shifted his attention to Wynn, who was seated.

"Hey, you're Wynn. right? Last year, I beat you black and blue, but you still haven't given up?"

"Ah..."

Regin was the previous year's top student.

During the examination, Wynn and Regin had a match, and defeated Wynn.

“Hmm, Even though it’s a waste of effort. Shouldn’t you hurry up and return to a place fitting for you?”

“What the heck are you saying. Wynn’s swordsmanship is decent, if not better, weren’t you his opponent?”

Recovering from his laughter, a red-faced, teary-eyed Locke talked back.

“Don’t say such stupid stuff. He lost because of his swordsmanship, as expected of a plebeian. There is a limit to being a sore loser.”

“Nevertheless, that is the truth.”

His smile fading, Locke spat out.

“Anyhow, it seems like the examiner was bribed with money and the sword was switched. Then, after the examination, the sword Wynn used was immediately disposed of to hide the evidence.”[6]

“Why would I do something like that?”

“Isn’t it to accommodate Jade’s wishes?”

“Stop talking.”

Amazed, Regin shook his head, and glanced at Jade, who was sitting at a place away from them.

Jade wasn't sitting with the other students in his clique[7], but sitting alone.

During the trip, it was strange that Jade wasn't leading his lackeys.

Did Jade's lackeys not participate on this mission?

"My house, the House of Reinhardt[8] and the Cliffdorf house are political rivals. I don't have a reason to accommodate that guy."

"Guh..."

Locke was silent.

It was correct.

Regin's House, the Reinhardt Marquis house, were political opponents of the Cliffdorf Marquis House.

Both families produced many military leaders, causing many power struggles in military circles.

Regin was also surrounded by lackeys of his own.

Especially during this mission, he had many followers participating in the mission, unlike Jade, who seemed to be alone and isolated.

Since both families had that sort of relationship, Jade van Cliffdorf wouldn't need Regin van Reinhardt to accommodate him.

When Locke had pressed the instructor, it hinted at by the instructor, but then he was sent away.

“Even then, after the match, my eligibility as the top student didn’t change.”

This was also true.

Even among the apprentice knights, Regin’s swordsmanship was top class, even when he took the examination, his ability had already guaranteed his success.

He had no reason to cheat in order to become the top student.

“You understand? If you do, let go of unrealistic dreams, and return to where you belong.”

Unrealistic dreams.

Wynn’s eyes fell to the knight sword on his waist.

It was lent to him by the equipment department only for the duration of the mission, it was a second-hand good.

It was his dream to be officially awarded this.

Despite it being borrowed, after three years, he was able to wear it,

It was the first step towards that unrealistic dream.

“That reminds me...”

Cornelia, who had rejected Regin’s invitation and then remained silent, had moved her gaze from the flame to Wynn.

“Why does Wynn-kun not give up on becoming a knight?”

Wynn was looking down at the sword at his waist, ignoring the quarrel between Regin and Locke as if it were somebody else's problem, when Cornelia's question brought him to his senses.

He recalled the time when he received that question before.

It was at the time he had reunited with Leticia.

'After attending for four years, how can you still hope to be a knight?'

He had thought that it was merely a question from a lost kouhai[9], so he had responded:

'I swore to myself that I would become a knight, without fail.'[10]

Even if it were an endlessly long path, he would surely arrive if he didn't give up.

Wynn swung his sword every day believing that.

'Furthermore, a close friend in the past is still trying her hardest alone in a distant place. Even if I don't become a knight, I want to be able to proudly say that I have worked hard..'

Due to the incident merely a month ago, Leticia felt even further away than those days, thinking on those days now.

However—

“When I was young, I had admired knights. To me, knights were, the strongest. the wisest, a blade of unbreakable determination. Protectors of the weak, and the final shield of their masters. The personifications of those ideals.”

Same as before, Wynn’s beliefs about knights had not changed.

Leticia was alone in a distant land working her hardest.

She, who he never thought he would meet again, beyond his wildest dreams, returned as the “Brave”.

Having defeated the Demon Lord, she had accomplished that which nobody else could do.

On the other hand, he...

Without being able to become an apprentice knight, he continued to struggle on towards his dream.

“Becoming a knight, without talent, without magic, without political power, without money. Without anything at all. Except, without giving up on dreams.”

He was merely continuing to struggle.

Because he only had this.

He averted his eyes from Cornelia, towards the embers rising from the flames.
[11]

Leticia had not changed between the time when she was young and when she returned. Even now, she yearned for Wynn.

She had climbed to a place much higher than himself, while he continued to believe that he would arrive there.

The world she stood in was separated from him by an endlessly long, impregnable path, that he couldn't imagine himself reaching there, but he still had his pride.

Leticia harbored goodwill towards him.

As a female, she had her eyes on the lone male, Wynn.

Even though he had noticed, Wynn couldn't respond to those feelings.

His surroundings would never allow it. [12]

Even then, he could at least guarantee her position as a close friend.

Besides, until his vow to become a knight has been fulfilled, he can't even call himself her close friend.[13]

"Even if I continue to hope, I have already failed the exam three times before. But, I believe that my determination wouldn't lose to anybody."

"Certainly, your determination must be number one in the empire."

Hiding his feelings with a joking tone, Locke spoke up while patting Wynn's shoulder with a smile.

"Hmm, an ambitious dream for a commoner."

Regin sneered.

Among them, only Cornelia wasn't smiling, motionlessly staring at Wynn's wry smile.

Within his eyes which stared at the flame as he spoke, his eyes gleamed with determination.

She had crossed swords with him multiple times during training, and each time, she had never thought of him as a failure for being defeated over and over.

At first, she had no choice but to partner with him because they both didn't have training partners. However, upon seeing the determination in his eyes, above her own problems, she wanted to know about him.

— It became the problem [14]

Even so, Cornelia couldn't suppress the curiosity towards Wynn stirring within her.

Like Cornelia, in a different place, there was another person observing Wynn. It was Aldo.

He was surprised to know that Wynn was participating in the mission.

His practical magic grades were considerably bad.

Not just that, the administration may have also looked down on him due to him being a commoner.

Therefore, he had judged that he would never be appointed for this mission.

“Which student are you interested in?”

At Aldo, who was observing Wynn's back, a knight from the fort called out.

Like Aldo, he had been a knight on the front lines, he was Aldo's old acquaintance.

“That is... is it Cadet Wynn? Is that guy the one Aldo is interested in?”

“It seems that knights are his ideal. Strongest, wisest, and a blade of unbreakable determination...”

Aldo closed his eyes to meditate on Wynn’s words.

“A childhood dream, is it, A knight straight out of a fairy tale.”

However, even he, who had that impression, didn’t laugh.

It was true that that sort of knight only came from fairy tales.

Reality wasn’t that nice.

However, wasn’t the knight he described the knight that everybody originally aspired to be?

Though since ideals and reality differed, they had to choose.

“By all rights, he may have already become a knight long ago, that boy.”

“Eh? Wasn’t he a failure who had to repeat school four times?”

“That’s right, though only that one part of him is well known.”

He moved his eyes from Wynn, and slowly walked away.

Though they were near the fort, there was no guarantee that demonic beasts wouldn't appear.

For the plan, it was necessary for the work he was given to be performed perfectly.

"Even once, If anybody sees his swordsmanship, they would also have the same opinion as me."

"Hee, that is interesting. A prodigy that even Aldo recognizes?"

"Ah, he should have been a prodigy..."

At the dark sound of Aldo's words, the other knight also fell silent.

Though the person himself is unaware, he was the one that "Leticia the Brave" loves as her master.

How will his existence affect the plan?

If in the one in a million chance that Wynn lost his life, that person would appear, the "Existence closest to God", and they and the empire would burn to the ground.

Nevertheless, once the plan begins, there would be no turning back.

'Could his excellency contain that Brave well?'

They exchanged a cup before sending each other off with a smile. Upon recalling his superior's face, Aldo sighed.

Whether the plan succeeds or fails, he would never meet that old general again.

There is no more time for that person.

For this reason, the plan must not fail.

With bitter determination, Aldo turned his gaze towards the Imperial Capital Simurgh.

Chapter 16: The night before ②

“Well, it’s not like I’m complaining, but...”

A person clad in a black hooded coat let out a frivolous voice — from his voice, he seemed to be male— while his tall figure crouched, drawing a pattern on the ground.

“Even though our plan is being put into motion, everybody is all gloomy like this. Cheer up! Be more enthusiastic! Even if it succeeds, it won’t be a success because of your thoughts.”

While muttering and grumbling, a faint light was emitted from his fingertip as he slowly etched the complex pattern.

“In the first place, is such a big magic formation really necessary? With this Seven-fold barrier formation using our power, what type of monster are we trying to confine?”

“A monster that destroyed your boss.”

The man referred to as ‘His Excellency,’ answered the robed man, with a shade of sarcasm in his voice.

However, the robed man ignored the sarcasm, and snickered.[1]

“Are we trying to confine the saviour of humanity this time? Hard to help aren’t you, you guys.”hard to please?

“You bastards are said to be unreasonable. For us to have to ask for your help...”

“Well, we are just working according to the contract. However, the Brave... Surely, it will be a feast, the flavour of despair.”

“Let’s shut up and finish our work quickly.”

Despite the voice of the old man, which was filled with impatience, the robed man whistled a tune as he slowly stood up.

Suddenly emerging from the darkness, he began to glide.

“Well, don’t be flustered. With rushed work, if the Brave notices, we will be finished right? The scary, scary Brave will come running, Zunbararin![2] Well, if you want to die, then it’s okay to rush it...”

“As long as it is unnoticeable, hurry up.”

“Yeah, yeah, even demons... you use roughly.”[3]

While grumbling complaints, he sighed while looking at the working demon. They couldn’t not rely on this bunch.

“This guy, can he really be trusted?”

One of the subordinates in the rear asked the man.

It wasn't unreasonable.

They had always fought against the demons

For a demon, that was once a menace, to be an integral part of the plan was inevitable.

He understood his subordinate's complicated feelings.

However...

"Don't worry. The demon is under a contract."

The seven-fold barrier magic formation.

It was a barrier that could even contain the magic of high-ranking demons, dragon-kind, and fairy-kin.

One of the empire's defensive trump cards, it was a high-level barrier magic.

It took an enormous amount of time to cast, with a ritual that required many expensive catalysts, that even with the magic amplifiers installed in the six fortresses surrounding the empire, he couldn't use it with the magicians he had on hand.

He had used his substantial fortune to gather the catalysts, and the activation of the fort's magic amplifier was left to his subordinate.

However, even with the magic amplifier, there was still not enough magic to cast the spell.

There was no choice but to borrow the power of their mortal enemy, a demon.

All for containing the Brave. [4]

"The demon is bound by a contract. As for the compensation, it is not a problem."

“That’s right. We demons are not like humans, we do not renege on promises.”

The demon affirmed the man’s words with a light tone.

At those words, he smiled wryly.

‘How unexpected, those words from a demon.’

While following the demon’s working figure, the aged man reflexively smiled bitterly.

Though the barrier couldn’t cover the whole school, if they were able to focus on one part, the Brave would be able to be contained.

Her intervention in the plan would mean the very failure of the strategy.

This plan would definitely cause much bloodshed.

It would be good if she turned a blind eye, but they couldn’t count on it.

However, this surely was an unforgivable act.

The aged man knew that he had earned a degree in mistakes.

Nonetheless, he had no more time.

For example, there are times where it is necessary to trick the Brave who saved the world.

After this, as a reward to his sympathizers and accomplices, his subordinates, the empire would not be abused for anybody’s gains anymore.[?1]

For that, he wouldn’t mind bearing the stigma of dishonor.

The plan has been polished, and all that is left is to put it into motion.

The aged man drew the sword which had accompanied him for half a lifetime near.

Now, there is no going back.

In the knight school's dormitories for high ranking nobles, there, was Leticia's dorm room.

There, where she and the other high ranked nobles live, was once where the emperor's favorite concubines lived.

If she had to say, due to Wynn influencing her commoner mindset, she had no positive thoughts about the dorm.

If one thought about how she had stayed in many cheap inns throughout the journey, the luxuriously built dormitories made her feel restless.

Though she had wanted to change her dormitory (if she could it would be one like Wynn's inn), and had requested it, the faculty rejected the request, and she had to stay in that dormitory.

However, being unable to calm down anyways, she decided to read books until she was sleepy.

After reading a library book on her bed, Leticia got up.[5]

For just a moment, she felt an uncomfortable feeling.

This was the Brave's sixth sense, honed across many battlefields.

Rising from the bed, she looked out the window.

Designed to be visible from the former imperial concubine's building, was the knight school's courtyard, formerly a flower garden filled with seasonal flowers in bloom all year-round.

When it was a palace, it was constantly lit by lamps, but now that it became an educational facility, among other things, the courtyard was covered in darkness in the night. but even with her extraordinary senses, she was unable to see the source of her unease in the darkness.

'Is it my imagination?'

She continued looking, but couldn't sense anything in particular.

She stopped feeling the unease she felt a moment ago.

Her gaze moved from the courtyard to the silhouette of the distant mountains.

Where that gaze fell, in those mountains, Wynn was probably there.

It was the periodic patrol subjugation mission.

Though low class, they would be fighting actual demonic beasts.[?2]

Leticia was worried about Wynn fighting against monsters.

Low-level monsters such as goblins in the beginning, and beasts corrupted by miasma and turned into demonic beasts, one would be able to defeat them alone.

When they were young, while the two of them worked together to fulfill the herb gathering requests from the adventurer guild, they had experience fighting the monsters several times.

Leticia had used a short-sword that she borrowed from her house.

Since they were still young, she had wielded it like a longsword.

Now that she thought about it, when she had carried the short-sword, her Onii-chan was surprised.

A smile leaked out as she recalled those times.

It was the old, ordinary times, when they ran around the town.

One day, in that same place, Leticia had noticed that Wynn's running speed

had slowed down.

They were in front of a run-down store.

Since it was early in the morning, every time they passed by, it was closed, so what kind of shop it was, Leticia didn't know, but that day, accompanying Wynn on an errand from Hanna, she finally found out what it sold.

It was a weapons store.

Though he was on an errand, Wynn had slowly, unsteadily, as if he was being pulled in, stepped towards the blades lined up in the weapon shop, gazing at them.

Leticia got bored, and urged him, "Come on, let's go," but he was so absorbed that he didn't answer.

The old man running the store, possibly because he recognized Wynn, merely gave them a fleeting glance.

The fact that he had selfishly passed through here, the young Leticia understood it well.

Rather than Wynn, the old man was interested in the well-dressed girl beside him, who stood out like a sore thumb.

After observing Leticia for a while, she soon started nodding off.

Meanwhile, Wynn was staring at the swords, motionlessly.

In his gaze, was a shabbily built short-sword.

Among the swords sold in the store, it was the cheapest one.

It wasn't a magic sword made for fighting monsters, just a regular, ordinary,

short-sword.

Even so, with the wages Wynn earned, no matter how hard he tried, he didn't have enough money.

In the end, the detour caused him to return late, and Wynn was scolded by Hanna.[6]

Leticia didn't see that incident, and immediately returned from Wataridori Pavilion to her mansion.

Routinely treated like air, she was surprised after having returned so vigorously.

Ignoring the wide-eyed servants, she had leapt into her room, and rummaged through her storage box.

After overturning several boxes, she finally found the item she sought.

Made with small ornaments, like a work of art, it was a short-sword.

Having grown old enough, her father, Duke Mavis, had given it to her.

Holding it to her chest, she had once again ran out of the mansion

The people at the mansion didn't stop her.

The had already treated her as an outcast, being the eccentric princess of the ducal house.

Though she more or less was allowed to live like a princess, if she were kidnapped for ransom, it had been decided that they would ignore it.

She truly was treated like air. [7]

To them, the short-sword was unique, given to her by her father, but to her, giving it to Wynn was not a problem.

Rather, if he were delighted when she showed him it, Leticia would be glad to give it to him.

While running back towards Wataridori Pavilion at full speed, the young girl's thoughts were filled with Wynn's figure, happily wielding the the short-sword.

'In the end, he never took it, until I had to leave.'

She had held the short-sword out to a speechless Wynn with a smiling face.

It was clear that, compared to the short-sword in the store — no, all the weapons there, it was much more expensive, upon looking at the short-sword for a while. However, Wynn couldn't accept it, and returned it to Leticia.

Leticia, who had thought that he would surely accept it, asked "Why?" And though she had held it back out for him, he stubbornly refused.

After a short argument, Leticia ran out of patience, and they decided to compromise, borrowing the sword while out doing herb collection requests.

In the end, in her final attempt to give him the short-sword, right before she left on her journey as the Brave, Leticia had used reinforcement magic on her sword with all her strength, and defeated Wynn for the first time ever.

Pulling back her wooden sword from Wynn's throat, she unwrapped the sash around her waist, and silently held out the short-sword.

He simply let out a slow sigh, and accepted the sword.

That time, he didn't refuse.

Mumbling one word, "Thanks," he accepted the sword.

With only that, Leticia's small chest was filled with happiness.

Though she was to be separated a long distance from him, the only feelings she could remember from that time was one with an infinite power, boiling within her.

The me of that time, I can still remember it even now.

The euphoria of that time.

From then on, she most likely had already fallen in love.

She had shifted her focus to the ridges of the distant mountains.

There, in that place, was the same, unchanged Wynn who persevered in his dream of becoming a knight.

'Do your best.'

She whispered in her mind.

He decided to aim for his dreams, without turning back.

Watching his back since they were small, Leticia would give small words of encouragement.

If she raised her eyes to the sky, she would see a starry sky filled with stars.

It was time to go to sleep.

During special training tomorrow, all the students were instructed to gather outside.

Though she is the Brave, Leticia is still a student.

Furthermore, she was still expected to attend the lecture

She looked at the mountains once more, then wistfully crawls into bed.

‘If I see a dream of that time, it would be good.’

She closed her eyes with those thoughts.

Chapter 17: Overture ①

At the break of dawn, the students were split into four groups, as instructed by the knights.

The knights from the fort joined, so that there were four knights and five students in each group.

Wynn was out in the fourth group, while Locke was in the third, and Cornelia was in the second.

“What! All three of us are in different groups?”

“It can’t be helped. Since it seems that the division of groups was decided by our grades.”

Locke, who had seen the rosters of the groups, grumbled.

Wynn and Cornelia, though, were not even apprentice knights, but merely cadets.

It was natural for the groups to be divided.

The students gathered at their respective gathering place, while the knights in charge discussed their preparations.

When they finished, they joined their respective groups, then the groups would depart the fort towards the forest.

“Did you sleep well last night?”

Cornelia, who came from the second group's rendezvous point, called out to Wynn, who was waiting for their departure.

"Yes, I did. Since I am used to hard floors, there weren't any problems. How about you, Cornelia-san?"

"I have the special skill of being able to sleep anywhere." [1]

"I'm so jealous of you..."

Many of the other students, on the other hand, were unable to get a wink of sleep the whole night, and had haggard expressions on their faces.

Most of those students were the nobles and rich people, who were used to laying in soft beds, and so were unable to sleep well.

There was also the fact that they were nervous, but sleep deprivation starting on the first day would become part of the challenge of the mission.

Though virtually all of the students in Wynn's group were in a similar state, for Wynn, it was somebody else's problem. he was concerned about not holding the group back.

Either way, they would have to face monsters and demonic beasts.

For those beasts, the situation here had nothing to do with them. [2]

This was an aspect which practice didn't have; They would risk their lives on this mission.

"Everybody on Wynn-kun's side is in a similar situation..."

Seeing one of Wynn's group-mates yawn, Cornelia murmured in an amazed tone.

"Even though they will soon be knights, they still feel like nobles... Due to their lack of a sense of danger, it would be good if we didn't pay a high price for it.

"Cornelia-san said a lot."[?1?]

"I also have a lot going on... [?2?] If it's you, Wynn-kun, you should be fine. Let's both do our best!"

After waving her hand while smiling, Cornelia turned back to her group.

The second group's knights had returned and given the assembly signal.

"Hey, there was a good atmosphere going wasn't there?"

After seeing Cornelia off, this time, it was Locke who showed up.

"What are you talking about?"

"Don't play dumb. It's about Cornelia-san."

Locke patted Wynn's shoulder while smirking.

"I heard the story about your practice match together, but I didn't think it was to the point that you could talk with each other so easily."

“... Is that so? Isn't it normal?”

“If Leticia-sama saw this, what would she say, I wonder?”

“... ..”

Wynn glared at Locke, who was snickering irresponsibly.

“I was just kidding. Well, if it's you, you'll be fine. Just don't try to recklessly gain achievements.”

“Ah, of course.”

Locke's face turned serious at those last words, then while waving his hands, he returned to his group.

‘He didn't have to say that.’

Certainly, if he did well, it was a good chance to get a recommendation to become an apprentice knight.

But he had to be careful.

Picking up his bag stuffed with provisions and camping equipment, Wynn fired himself up.

The four knights in charge of Wynn's group were walking.

“We've kept you all waiting. Let's go.”

At those words, they marched towards the forest together.

This was the subjugation mission's overture. [3]

Together with the four knights, the fourth group finished their final check on their equipment, and then left the highway and walked towards the forest.

As they made their way through the narrow animal trails, the overgrown tree leaves blocked the sunlight, making it appear gloomy.

At first, they had set off in a good mood, chatting with each other, but slowly, the lively atmosphere was overwhelmed, and it fell silent.

As they marched towards the designated campsite, they carefully searched for the enemy.

As soon as a monster appears, they would subjugate it. And in the unlikely case that there were none, they would return to the fort and meeting up with the other groups.

Unlike the highways and the school's practice grounds, the path was muddy, and low-hanging tree branches, and animals blocked the way, and the path was steep and uneven, which wore on the students' mental and physical strength.

Of the knights in charge of the fourth group, one was transferred from the capital, while three of them were from the fort.

The forty knights from the capital served under the squad captain, and the other thirty knights from the fort followed the vice-captain. [?3?]

In the front line, led by the squad captain and senior knights from the fort, while the students were being lined up, the vice-captain and another person were walking in the very rear.

The vice-captain observed the situation from the very back, while paying attention to his surroundings.

Four hours after they began marching, the nobles who never practiced

diligently were already struggling to merely walk due to fatigue.

‘It seems that they were unable to sleep well last night.’

From the start of the expedition, the mental strain from being vigilant towards the surroundings had exhausted their stamina.

All of the students were gradually hanging their heads and looking at their feet.

However, the reason that the vice-captain made a bitter face was the squad captain in the front.

It can't be helped that the students were inattentive due to fatigue.

They were still inexperienced apprentice knights, who would gain experience alongside the full-fledged knights. They should be forgiven for that much.

On the other hand, the full-fledged knights, even the captain, were making sluggish steps for some reason.

He had already entrusted the vanguard to his subordinates, so he marched on in silence.

Even though at the beginning, the students had asked self-important questions.

While thinking bitter thoughts, he observed the surroundings from the back. Then, to the left of the group, was a thicket.

In it, an unnatural shadow was visible.

The students were not paying attention, but even the knights haven't noticed.

The shadow aimed for one of the students, slowly creeping closer, and when it was around five to six meters away, it immediately accelerated!

“...Eh?”

At last, the student who was targeted finally noticed the shadow.

An exhausted sound leaked out, and the shadow leapt out as he watched —

— Shit, there's no time!

As soon as he saw the shadow, he had already begun to move towards it, but the students in front of him blocked his path.

While the other knights and students haven't moved—

The vice-captain's eyes saw a silver light be absorbed by the shadow —

With a loud shriek, the shadow jumped aside, writhing in pain.

With a hair raising scream, the black shadow tumbled to the ground while thrashing about, knocking two students away.

After rolling once, then twice ... it got up, raising its voice into a howl.

At first glance, it seemed to be a rat.

However, it was the size of a wolf, and its head was covered in reptilian scales, a grotesque rat-like figure.

— Monster.

“Uwaah...” “Uwaaaaah!?”

Advancing from a thicket in the middle of a treacherous terrain, and a dark, dense forest, while the students' stamina and spirits were exhausted, was a dreaded encounter with monsters.

The students fell into a panic — “Stop panicking!”

The vice-captain thundered a command.

“Hold up your shields, draw your swords! Is this how you aim to become the Empire's knights?”

As if struck by lightning, the galvanized[4] students raised their shields and drew their swords.

‘Yes, though they are agitated, it should be fine.’

They had somehow passed the knight examination.

Once they prepared their stances, they outnumbered it.

‘First off, we won't lose.’

The vice-captain didn't attack again, and observed the situation as the students encircled the monster.

His eyes were caught by a youth standing in front of the demonic beasts.

‘That student is the cadet that Aldo paid attention to.’

The silver flash from before was him throwing the short sword, cutting through the air.

The short sword deeply embedded into the rat-like monster's right eye.

If it weren't for that attack, the recently targeted student would have had his throat torn to shreds.

While letting out an angry growl, the monster gnashed its fangs menacingly.

However, being completely surrounded on all sides, though agile, the demonic beast had no chance.

Though they had somewhat backed away, the students' swords wounded the demonic beast's skin.

"So that's the cadet called Wynn."[?4?]

Suddenly, one of his subordinates was standing next to him.

"Ah. It's merely that Aldo-san has his eyes on him."

Up until now, the students had a solid advantage.

The student directing the battle, the cadet named Wynn, went around the front of the surrounded monster, to the blind spot created by the short-sword, supporting the other students' attacks.

Wynn stood in front of the demonic beast, while two people moved to the left and right behind it.

The two people standing in the back specialized in attack magic began to chant magic.

Rather than specialize in fighting against humans, his style specialized in fighting monsters.

Stabbing at an opponent's weak points, it was an adventurer's fighting style.

According to Wynn's instructions, they repaired the formation.

Despite being an ostracized commoner, they had arrived at this situation due to his directions.

It was to the point that the nobles were able to recognize his judgment.

"That lad, he still has energy to spare in this fight."

"... It's regrettable, isn't it?"

The fact that he was devoted to distracting the monster, while also paying attention to the surroundings, speaks volumes of his experience fighting monsters.

At that age, he might be imitating an adventurer.

"Soon, it will be a good time for our plan. What should we do?"

The vice-captain looked up at the sky.

At the beginning of the plan, the students needed to be occupied for the plan to work.

Therefore, encountering a monster from the beginning was helpful.

However, looking at the battle, it would be good to cast away that plan.

Especially that Cadet Wynn — no — beyond the weapon in his hands, there were many uncertain factors. [5?]

Though the thick branches and leaves blocked the sunlight, the sun was slowly reaching its zenith.[5]

“How far is the fort, and how far are the other groups?”

“It is as planned.”

Nodding at the subordinate’s report, he would wait and see what the captain did.

As if grading them, he stood behind the students and watched the course of the students’ battle.

The battle was headed towards the end.

The two students finished their chants, and the monster was covered in flames.

Letting out a soft whine, the monster fell to the ground, then the two students stabbed at it with their swords.

The demonic beast’s death cries resounded.

“If we’re doing it, we must do it now.”

Matching the vice commander, his two subordinates also slowly drew their swords.

Displaying his resolution at the beginning was his role as their superior.

He softly crept behind the squad captain, who was proudly looking at the students’ battles...

“Ah... Gah...”

In one motion, the vice-captain’s sword pierced the captain’s back, and exited

his chest, and fresh blood spurted out.

Chapter 18: Overture ②

The fourth group and the knights that joined them advanced along the steep and uneven trail. [1]

On the other side of the forest, was the mountain.

The trail gradually became steeper, and their stamina would be exhausted more quickly.

Up until now, they had not encountered a single monster.

However, this was land that humans don't set foot on.

Encountering a monster, or finding a low-level demon nest wouldn't be strange.

When they took a short break, they had been marching for around five hours.

Wynn felt that the sun should reach its peak soon.

The students gradually became silent, as the footing became worse, and they grew fatigued, to the point that they were now looking at their feet in order to gain footing.

Wynn walked at the end of the line of students.

Since the other students were all nobles, Wynn was treated like air, but since he had strength to spare, he observed the full-fledged knights walking at the very back.

The knight acting as a guide at the front, and the two knights at the back were walking with unstrained expressions.

As one would expect, that was the point in which the students differed from them.

They were knights who were from the fort.

To Wynn, it was meaningful, since he was so close to his ideal, the knights.

With robust bodies and tenacious wills, no matter the difficulty, they travelled all over.

On the other hand, the knight serving as captain, who came from the capital, like the other students, seemed to be concealing his exhaustion.

His gait had become unsteady.

Rather, the students' gaits were not as bad.[2]

The students, who still trained, had better stamina.

The knights assigned to the capital should have been the best of the best, but —.

Wynn felt like he had seen the reality again. [3]

Their exhaustion had taken away their ability to concentrate and think, causing them to disregard any caution for their surroundings.

Due to this, Wynn was the only student who had the presence of mind to notice the shadow.

From the thicket, the shadow soundlessly and rapidly approached —

As soon as he noticed it, Wynn drew the short-sword at his waist and extended his left hand—

“... Eh?”

The jaw lined with sinisterly sharp fangs approached a student walking towards the capital, and—

It let out a hair-raising howl.

As if it were flicked away, the shadow jumped aside, rolled on the ground, and then unsteadily picked itself up.

It was the size of a wolf, and reptilian scales covered its head.

Its sharp fangs could easily tear off a man's flesh.

Due to the pain from the short-sword impaled in its eye, the demonic beast let out a howl while grinding its fangs.

Wynn drew the knight sword,[4] and then circled around the front of the demonic beast.

He held out the sword in order to draw the demonic beast's attention towards himself.

Since the other students had not yet recovered from the shock of the demonic beast's sudden assault, Wynn was acting as a decoy in order to draw attention and let the victim[5] escape.

The demonic beast, had decided to target the human who had crushed its right eye.

It took a low stance as if waiting for an opportunity, while eyeing the distance between them.

Likewise, Wynn also continued to wait for an opening in the demonic beast's defense.

At that time —

“Calm down!”

The vice-captain's roar resounded.

“Hold up your shields, raise your swords! Is this how you aim to become the Empire’s knights?”

The panicked students held up their shields and drew their swords, as they realized what was happening.

On the other hand, the vice captain’s roar became a chance for Wynn and the monster to break the standoff.

Kicking the ground with its thick legs, the demonic beast leapt towards Wynn.

“Ooooooooooooooooooo!”

Wynn raised a battle cry and met the assault.

As magic power flowed into the knight sword, the magic symbols carved into the blade gave off a pale blue glow.

With a step, he dodged the leaping monster’s extremely quick charge.

Immediately after sidestepping, he looked at the demonic beast’s back exposed by the charge, and used the opening to slash at it.

However, the slash was evaded, using the demonic beast’s advantage of having four legs to kick the ground again.

Letting out a growl, the demonic beast turned to face Wynn.

“I will draw its attention. Two people should go around back, while two people should cover us using magic!”

Without looking away from the demonic beast, he gave instructions to the other students.

Though he was worried about whether or not those nobles would accept instructions from a commoner like him, in this situation, no complaints were made.

Obediently following his instructions, they held up their shields in front of them, and put pressure on the demonic beast.

Using the blind spot created by the short-sword impaled into the right eye, Wynn moved to his left while provoking the demonic beast with his sword.

While all its attention was focused on Wynn, other students attacked it from the back.

With these circumstances, the outcome of the battle was decided.

While thinking that, Wynn continued to distract the demonic beast while searching for another enemy in the surroundings.

Due to the smell of the blood spilt from the demonic beast, there was no guarantee that another monster wouldn't draw near.

The knights should be paying attention to the surroundings, but it was dangerous to merely rely on that.

Even in the midst of a battle, he had not lost his cool.

Thanks to that —

He was able to sense the killing intent behind him.

Taking his eyes off of the demonic beast, he looked behind him.

A blade was sticking out of the fourth group's captain.

He was coughing out blood from his half-open mouth, and blood pooled at his

feet.

The one holding the blade was the knight acting as the vice-captain.

His eyes were trained on Wynn.

Those eyes were filled with a distinct killing intent.

Wynn immediately jumped at the demonic beast's corpse, and pulled out his short-sword with his right hand and took a stance.

"Pay attention!"

"What!?"

At Wynn's sharp warning, the students who were admiring their first defeated monster looked up.

Before their eyes, the man who was the captain fell wordlessly into the pool of blood.

"Ca-captain?"

"Huh? What? What's happening?"

Unable to keep up with the sudden change in circumstances, the students let out confused voices.

The knights did not fail to use that opportunity—

The two students in the back who had used their magic were suddenly cut down by one person.

Towards the other two people, yet another knight drew near.

“U, Uwah!”

They panicked.

The approaching knight drew the shield in his left hand back, and fainted[6].

The student took the bait, and, unable to hide his agitation made a large swing, and his body also followed— and the knight’s sword cut into his undefended body.

“Ah, aah, AAAAAAAH!”

Upon seeing the the student dying as blood sprayed out,The last person threw his sword away, and turned to run away.

“What a fool.”

In his panic, he fell down, and the pursuing knight stabbed him in the heart from the back—

With lightning speed. [7]

In the blink of an eye, Wynn was alone.

While slowly backing away, he continued to search for a chance to run away.

He observed the terrain of the trail that he had walked on some moments ago.

He processed the various pieces of information in his head.

“As expected, you are dangerous, Cadet Wynn.”

The vice-captain, holding his blood-soaked sword and his shield, slowly drew

closer.

Wynn's eyes showed that he had not given up.

On the contrary, he still showed his strong intentions to overcome these circumstances.

“Were you imitating the adventurer's form? You have excellent combat experience.”

“I was merely working desperately in order to eat, that's all!”

As he said those words, he immediately turned around and ran at full speed.

‘He's fast!’

The full-fledged knights reflexively stood staring.

The way he ran was fundamentally different from the other student who fled.

Within the forest with poor terrain, he ran faster than even a full-fledged knight could run with body reinforcement.[8]

Wynn, who couldn't use body reinforcement magic, wore light armor like the others in his group, but even taking that into account, his movements had become familiar with the distinct environment of the forest.

‘It can't be helped.’

Deciding not to pursue him, the vice-captain ran while chanting offensive magic.

“I, who has understood the way of fire, Fireball!”

The magical flame flew towards the sprinting Wynn’s back.

Feeling the heat, Wynn looked over his shoulder and—

Then, an explosion sounded in the forest.

Chapter 19: Overture ③

At the time the explosion sounded in the forest.

“Hey hey hey... what kind of joke is this!?”

Towards the man standing before his eyes, Jade, Regin let out a flustered voice.[1]

Cornelia was also still bewildered by the turn of events.

While marching in the forest, many arrows were aimed at the knights both in the front and the back of the line. Taken by surprise, they were fell, covered in arrows.[2]

Unable to cope with the suddenness, in front of their dumbfounded selves, soldiers armed with bows and spears, and armoured knights appeared from between the trees..

Among those knights, they saw some familiar faces.

They were the knights leading the first group, which should have marched along a different route from the second group.

However, the only student was Jade.

She wasn't sure how many of them there were, due to the trees blocking her view, but there were definitely more knights than those who had set off from the fort.

Of course, at the time the soldiers set off, there was no campaign.

They were armed with bows and spears.

They were clearly equipment meant for fighting humans.

“What are you planning, Jade van Cliffdorf? Are you starting a rebellion?”

“Rebellion, is it?...”[3]

Jade let out a scornful laugh at Regin’s question.

“The ones starting a coup d’état, are the dead insects there. Have you not received the news from the Reinhardt house?”

“What!?”

“Thanks to them, it was simple to proceed. I thank the fools who organized the coup d’état.”

“What do you mean?”

“It seems that I can push the blame all onto them.”[?1?]

Jade slowly raised his sword, and the surrounding soldiers led by Jade raised their spears.

Killing intent surged.

It was clear that they intended to kill Regin and the others.

“Instead of the colleagues of those who caused the coup d’état, I will get rid of you.”

Regin’s gaze quickly moved through his surroundings.

‘The students in the second group are still stunned by the sudden turn of events and the killing intent. They probably won’t be helpful.’

‘While they are my lackeys, it can’t be helped that they’re helpless in this situation.’

‘In the first place, even if they could fight, they wouldn’t be able to overcome the difference in power.’

‘I cannot see the whole group, so I cannot grasp the strength of the force Jade led, but there are at least one hundred people.’

They were outnumbered by at least twenty times.

‘As for running, there was only one way to escape.—’

Regin focused on Jade.

There was a distance of approximately ten steps between them.

‘If he somehow managed to take Jade hostage, then he could flee from this place.’

‘However, what should I do after I escape this place?’

His gaze fell on the bodies of the knights.

‘They were knights assigned to the fort.’

‘If Jade’s words are true, the fort is most likely occupied by insurgents.’

‘Returning to the capital through the forest and reporting the information to the Knight Order’s top brass sounds like a good idea.’

Fortunately, the Reinhardt Marquis House had a large voice in the Knight Order.

‘An appropriate countermeasure would be taken.’

‘Besides—’

Regin’s gaze moved to Cornelia, who was standing near him.

‘Despite being exposed to life-threatening danger, it must take a strong will to not scream or cry.’

Unlike Regin’s followers, who had let out quivering voices, she had not even let out a gulp.

Regin once again looked at Jade.

‘Though this is a pinch, it is also a chance.’

‘If I can to move freely from here, I will have achieved a tremendous feat.’

‘Far from a full-fledged knight, I might even become one of the knight order’s top brass.’

‘Rather, even the path to becoming an emperor is...’

Regin thought out his plan.

“It can’t be helped. I wouldn’t win if I tried to fight. I surrender.”

“That was easier than I thought... even if you surrender, I will make use of you, but...”[?2?]

“I am the eldest son of the Reinhardt house. If we join forces, can you imagine

the things we could do?”

He walked towards Jade with both hands in the air.

‘One step, two steps, three steps... If I could just get a little bit closer...’

Regin was confident in his hand to hand combat skills.

He didn’t become the previous year’s head of the class by chance.

In reality, he could boast of strength equal to or surpassing a knight order captain.

‘If I can hold Jade hostage until I reach the capital, then report the circumstances, I will become an instant hero.’[4]

While gloating in his heart, he advanced. Four steps, five steps... [5]

‘Then, I will jump at this guy...’

‘All the people of the capital will hear of my name.’[6]

‘Then beside me, Cornelia will be dressed up beautifully—’

Imagining his future bliss, his sixth step was the end.

An arrow sunk into his forehead—

Piercing through his skull, the arrow head stuck out the back of his head.

Regin fell backwards, wide-eyed.

It was instant death.[7]

The students didn't let out a sound.

They only stared at the scene, their legs soundlessly quivered.

"How splendid!"

Holding a bow, a middle-aged knight beside Jade stepped forward and called out to Jade.

The knight pounded his chest, saluting Jade.

"I am very sorry. For Jade-sama to have to act as the decoy."

"I was prepared. I had faith in your skill."

"Such words are too generous. However, now that I think about it, in the unlikely event that I missed, the results would not have been good."

"You are forgetting who you are talking to, even if I somehow became a hostage, I would make a plan to escape. Besides, being captured might be entertaining."

"That is honestly the reason we were troubled. I humbly beg for forgiveness."

Grimacing, the frank old knight flashed a good-humoured smile at Jade.

"That being said, what was that explosion sound just now?"

“Judging by the compass, that was in the direction of the fourth group.”

“Tch...”

At that news, Jade clicked his tongue.

‘It seems those fools who started the coup d’état moved first.’

‘The fourth group is the one with the eyesore of a plebeian.’

‘I thought that I could use that plebeian who is close to the Brave to obtain her, but...’

When he received information about the plan, Jade immediately removed his underlings from the list of those participating.

Furthermore, he gradually increased the amount of people at the fortress who served the Cliffdorf Marquis House.

Jade personally made it so that those knights were assigned to the first group with him.

Then, Jade arranged for those who were the Cliffdorf house’s rivals to participate on the mission, so he could deal with them.

Using this chance, after massacring them, all the blame would be placed on the nincompoops who planned the coup.

For nobles, losing the heir is a large blow to their standing.

It often leads to the extinction of the lineage.

Naturally, other than the eldest son, there were the second and third sons, but it would still deal a lot of damage to the House.

This would greatly benefit to the Cliffdorf house.

He was now unable to disregard the commoner to whom the Brave was close.
[?3?]

Somebody reached Jade's side, and tried to curry favor.

"Fumu, so things aren't going completely as planned..." (Jade)

"It is good that we have taken care of the Reinhardt here."

At his subordinate's words, he nodded calmly.

Regin van Reinhardt was the eldest son of the Marquis Reinhardt's house.

Since Jade was the eldest son of the Cliffdorf house, and he was also in the same year as Regin, they frequently competed with each other.

Certainly, he was a rival for the position of next generation's Knight Order Captain, but Jade wouldn't be troubled by his absence.

Though he was unable to obtain the Brave as his own, he still lusted for this desire.

'If that's the case, let us modify the beginning of the plan.'

Jade moved his attention to the students, who stood still, shivering in fear.

'You wouldn't believe that these unsightly people are nobles. I should also get rid of them.'

'Either way, the blame will be placed on those guys.'

'I'll just take out the trash ahead of time.'

"What of Father and the rest?"

“They have already left the capital, and are headed towards our territory.”

“Alright then. Let us proceed with our plan!”

“”Yes sir!!””

At Jade’s order, raising their weapons into the sky, the hundred knights before him chanted.[?4?]

Then, they promptly moved to exterminate the isolated people there.

“Help us!”

“P-please don’t kill us....”

Pretending not to see the extermination of the students by his subordinates, Jade slowly walked towards Cornelia.

Motionless, she merely stared straight at Jade.

“Well then, if you don’t resist, we will not harm you. You will serve as our figurehead.”[?5?]

Originally, he would have that girl’s death blamed on the insurrectionists, but the situation changed.

After Jade’s subordinates finished massacring the students, they gathered behind him, their leader.

Pompously, Jade slowly knelt down on one knee and bowed down towards Cornelia.

“If by chance you would like to join us, we of the Cliffdorf house will receive you in our territory. It is negotiable. Would you like to come with us? Your Highness.?

Cornelia Raul Lute Remulshil.

Being the first princess of the empire, she was second in line to the throne. While superficially paying respects to her, Jade smiled coldly.

+++++++

1. so Regin is the student who is jade's rival, and Nigel is the knight, who might be dead... I get them mixed up...

Chapter 20: Motive

She was the first princess of the Remulshil Empire, Cornelia Raul Kooru Remulshil. [3]

She was second in line to the throne.

Cornelia was the imperial family's only daughter, so aside from blood relatives and those who married in, it was intolerable for her to be touched directly by somebody.

Knowing this, none of the nobles approached her.

People from the marquis houses, such as Regin and Jade were an exception.

On the contrary, they actively approached Cornelia. They saw her as a way to immediately become part of the imperial family.

Of course, Crown Prince Alfred was first in line to the throne, but being her second in line was very valuable.

Because if anything happens to Crown Prince Alfred, she will undoubtedly inherit the crown as Empress.

However, even if they are the sons of prominent nobles, they shouldn't approach Cornelia carelessly.

If they were to approach her against her will, the emperor might even give them a death sentence.

However, not only was this to protect her, but it was also her father the Emperor's selfish desire, which caused her to be isolated at the Knight School.

With Jade at the front, she walked through the forest, between four knights.

Due to the scout soldiers who had cleared the path, rather than a march, it

was more like a walk in the park.

They continued walking, and eventually, reached the highway.

There, was a luxurious white carriage, and on it, the golden crest of the marquis house was extravagantly engraved.

“Well then, Your Highness. Your hand please...”

Jade climbed into the carriage first, then held out his hand to Cornelia.[4]

However, Cornelia didn't accept his hand, and wordlessly boarded the carriage herself.

Jade, who was brushed off, momentarily showed a discouraged expression, but then urged Cornelia to take a seat.

Without any particular reason to reject the offer, she took a seat.

“Alright, let us set off.”

At Jade's command, the carriage started moving.

‘Is there some sort of magic spell going on?’

‘I can't feel the shaking of the carriage at all.’

‘This level of performance should only be found in a carriage for the imperial family.’

‘In order to make this carriage, how much gold was used?’[5]

The one servant who acted as a mediator between them held out a cup of black tea.

Judging by the smell of the tea leaves, this was also of the highest quality.

The teapot which held the tea also seemed to be magically insulated, since

the steam rose from the cup.

She took a sip.

‘About these circumstances...’

‘It seems that it isn’t poisoned.’

Since her mouth and throat was parched due to the tense situations, the tea tasted extremely good.

As if it immediately disappeared down her throat, she drank the tea.

It was a reminder to herself what kind of people Jade and his company were, and it intimidated her.

After having drank the tea, Cornelia took a breath, then met Jade’s gaze.

“So, what type of role will I play in your plan?”

“Please understand. You will merely be our figurehead.”

“Your objective?”

“After we eradicate the rebel faction opposing the throne, you will ascend to the throne.”

/

“You will not stop the coup d’état?”

When Jade was asked this question, he smiled.

“At this point, even if we take action, it won’t be in time. I recommend that your highness take refuge in my territory, and plan a comeback from there.”

‘How dare you!’

Cornelia became angry, but frantically tried not to let it show.

Having been prepared to kill Regin, the Cliffdorf house definitely had prior information of the coup d’état.

Despite this, they didn’t work to prevent it, but preferred to use it to gain political strength.

Most likely, when she ascends to the throne, this man would be standing beside her.

Welt van Cliffdorf as her adviser, and Jade as her husband, it would be that sort of story.

Moreover, they would be hailed as heroes for ending the coup d’état.

Those who don’t know anything would undoubtedly praise them.

Jade did not betray any agitation in his eyes, merely sighing in admiration at the princess, who was staring at him.[?1?]

Within those pupils, it was apparent that she had almost grasped Jade and the others’ intentions.

“As expected of somebody with the royal blood. Even in this situation, you have nerves of steel. I congratulate you. I now have a slightly better opinion of you.”

“You are changing this messed up situation for better as you please. By the way, what happened to the other groups?”

“Unfortunately, I fear that they were killed.”

Contrary to his words, Jade appeared unconcerned.

From his answer, Cornelia understood that Jade's cohort knew that there was a coup, what actions they would take, and also what would happen next.

She recalled that despite the tense atmosphere, they had still talked cheerfully.

She especially thought of Wynn, who had sparred with her countless times during practice.

If Jade's words were true, even he would have been killed.

Last night, by the campfire, Wynn had spoken passionately about his dream to become a knight.

Even he would have died.

Not living a desirable school life, within her lonely days of isolation, she had finally made a true friend in her training partner.

Once, she had touched his sleeve.[6]

Not as Princess Cornelia, but as Knight Cadet Cornelia, though when she returned after class in the evening, she was scolded by the attendants.

As a knight cadet, she was overlooked, but—

But now, it will never be like that again.

A single tear streamed down her face.

“Are you crying for the people who were killed? The people will support a ruler with such deep compassion. When we retake the capital at dawn, I want you to display your condolences.”

Jade held out a white silken handkerchief.

Cornelia rejected it, and wiping her eyes, she stood up.

“... Can you say so with confidence? Among those who have died, that Brave...”

“About Wynn Byrd? Of course!”

“You know him?”

“Rescuing Your Highness was the highest priority. There was no alternative. I will use his death. If she learns that the insurgents killed him...”

“The Brave would smash the insurgents?”

Jade smiled coldly.

‘Jade would even make use of his death?’[7]

‘Will things really go as planned?’[8]

Certainly, the Brave would have a motive to draw her sword against the insurgents.

However, wouldn’t that blade not only be pointed at the insurgents, but also at the root of the problem, the empire itself?

The consequences of his death — the Empire might have the Brave as its enemy.

“Umm... Won’t Leticia van Mavis oppose them?”

“That is our intention.”

“With them in control of the fort, they intended to use the magic amplifier.

However!”

“Gatan,” At that time, the carriage shook a little.

At that point, the carriage that did not shake up until now, as if in a building, shaking began to be felt.

“This is...?”

“It seems that they have set the plan into motion.”

“... Barrier magic.”

The empire’s anti-demon trump card.

It was a wide-area barrier that sealed any magic power.

“Even with that magic, they cannot completely seal the Brave’s magic power, but they still have yet another trump card. Well, if the Brave is killed, then we will have unparalleled influence.”

Unable to watch Jade proudly continue speaking, Cornelia looked out the window.

She gazed at the passing landscape.

Jade and the others have taken the insurgents and the Brave too lightly.

From her Master, whom she had met after four years, she heard that Leticia has unbelievable strength.

Cornelia's Master.

She is the one who holds the title "Holy Woman", Liara Sayn.

One of the Brave's three comrades.

According to Liara, she had fought a multitude of demons and monsters.

She had fought a battle of legendary proportions, so if her magic was sealed, then she wouldn't be a threat, or so they thought.

In the first place, she was an existence which slew the Demon Lord, who could defeat all the world's combined armies.

If they were able to kill her by merely sealing her magic, wouldn't the demons have already defeated the Brave long ago?

Anyways, it was already too late to be worried about that.

If Wynn was killed, the Brave's rage would rain down on this empire.

The other countries would also direct criticisms at the empire.

Even if Jade's plan progressed, the empire would be headed towards ruin.

'Somehow, please calm down.'

In that moving Carriage, Cornelia voiced out that wish. [9]

...

At the time the explosion was heard from the part of the forest the fourth group was in charge of—

In the third Group, Locke and the other students were being surrounded by the knights that accompanied them.

From the beginning, Locke had felt that something was wrong with the knights.

Apart from the captain, who was from the capital, he had seen the other three hold secret conversations many times.

During a short break, even the vice-captain exchanged information behind the captain's back.

Many times, they opened the map, and confirmed the locations of both the third group and the other groups.

They even checked the distance from the fort.

If it were normal, they wouldn't act so strangely.

They might only confirm their route.

However, they did it behind the back of the captain, a knight, and repeatedly. However he thought about it, it was strange.

From Locke's point of view, he held the title of captain in name only. His body was weak from lack of practice, and he was a man that you wouldn't believe was a knight.

But either way, a superior is a superior, or that was how it was supposed to be.

The goal of making the group, on paper (Locke had decided that the captain was captain only on paper), was supposed to be to teach the essentials of knighthood.[10]

Nevertheless, the captain merely received simple reports of which direction to go and future plans, while the vice-captain received the important reports.

'Hey, something is up.'

“Hey.”

“What is it, Locke?”

He whispered to the person marching beside him.

“Something smells fishy.[11] Those guys may be up to something. Just in case, be careful. and tell the others too.”

Though he gave Locke a puzzled look, he easily moved beside the student in front of him, and whispered Locke’s message.

The reason that Locke could influence the other students like that was because he was from a rich mercantile house.

Due to their commoner origins, high-ranking nobles such as Jade and Regin despised these upstart nobles, but since they were a rare class, the relationship between most nobles and wealthy merchants didn’t differ.

Against the social influence of nobility, money was more than enough ammunition. [12]

If they were ordinary nobles, they would not oppose the Marine house.

The nobles only had so much wealth.

If Locke didn’t flaunt it, he could interact with most people as equals. Compared to Wynn, he was much more well-connected.

That’s why, after the knight leaders invited them to a place dotted with holes, the knight who was captain fell into a pitfall and was killed, but none of the students did not receive a surprise attack, and the knights weren’t able to ambush them.[13]

Nonetheless, for the five inexperienced knight cadets, against the three full-fledged knights, despite outnumbering them, their victory was uncertain.

“I will take on the vice-captain. As for the two knights behind him, attack them two on one, flanking them.”

“Got it.”

Confronting the vice-captain, Locke raised his shield.[14]

“Locke Marine. I heard that you were the foolish second son of the Marine house, but it seems the rumors were wrong.”

“That’s not the case. Three years ago, I was that idiot son.”

The elder brother, who was the heir received an education, while the second son Locke was given relatively more freedom.

More or less, he was taught by the same teacher as his brother, but behind his parents’ backs, he would often sneak out to play with the neighborhood children.

Even when he decided to enter the Knight School, he learned from the children of the nobles who came and went that he only needed to procure the money for the admission fee.

Not wanting to study, he only wanted to get the title of knight while just playing around.

If he graduated from knight school, instead of going to a battlefield, he would be able to work in the capital, where safety is guaranteed.

If he were a knight, the ladies would surely like him.

That was all he thought.

It was superficial.

Three years ago, Locke was no better than a good-for-nothing noble.[15]

Then, when he met Wynn, his way of thinking about knighthood changed completely.

He was a commoner, he had no family to rely on, and didn't even have magical talent.

Compared to the other students, Wynn had nothing.

However— he, in order to achieve his dream of becoming a knight, spared no effort— and Locke continued to see that figure near himself.

It was dazzling.

He honestly felt amazed.

Wynn held his shield to the front, and gripped his sword.

Until he met Wynn, all he had done was irresponsibly cut corners during sword practice.

Feeling embarrassed at the difference, even when nobody was watching, he practiced swinging his sword.

At times, he would steal a glance and imitate Wynn's practicing form.

Due to that, Locke was able to achieve the runner up position last year in the exam.

‘It was due to your help, that I am now not scared of fighting my first real battle.’

Locke slowly inhaled, then slowly exhaled.

He looked straight at the vice-captain.

His four teammates were skillfully forcing a two on one battle.

Being nobility, they had more training in magic than the knights before them.

Though they had less live combat experience and skill, if they fought using body strengthening magic, individually, they should at least be half as good as the knights.[16]

“The other two are at a disadvantage? Until I can slay Apprentice Knight Locke, will they hold out?”

Like Locke, the vice-captain judged the situation similarly.

“If you focus on defense, and manage to hold out while waiting for the other brats to defeat my subordinates... Is that what you thought?”

“Who knows? But please don’t kill me off so quickly!”

Locke flashed an intrepid smile.[17]

If either one of the two 2-on-1 battles ended with the knight’s defeat, Locke’s group’s chances of victory would increase.

In other words, all he needed to do was gain time.

“Then show me what you’ve got!”

Locke parried the vice-captain's blade, which came from behind the vice-captain's shield, with the shield in his left hand.

As expected of a knight who worked his way up from the battlefield.

Even at the level of the mock battles against his classmates, he did not enjoy taking fierce onslaughts.[?2?]

But Locke stopped the blade's path with his shield, parrying each and every blow.

"How incredible. Even though it's your first real battle."

The vice-captain was surprised to notice that Locke was handling his strikes with composure.

He was somebody who had survived each of the numerous battlefields he had fought in.

Rather than fall behind like he expected of a student, Locke continued to handle his attacks admirably.

As one who had become a knight through battlefield achievements, he had thought the sword techniques of the knights from the knight school were merely a form[18], but...

In the realities of a battlefield, it was important for a technique to kill with one blow.

One hardly ever got a second or a third blow.

The vice-captain continued to interweave feints with attacks.

The blows filled with strong killing intent would weaken the mind of the still young apprentice knight, but Locke, who was concentrating on his defense,

defended well.

Though the Marine house was a commoner house, they had married with nobility many times, so luckily, he had better than average magic power.

Though Locke fell behind in battle experience and skill, using body reinforcement magic to strengthen himself, he was able to hold out.

‘Besides...’

‘Unlike this, the sword of the Master of the Brave is imperceptible even when up close!’

Wynn’s sword swings were unbelievably fast.

It rivals the one who holds the title “Divine Sword Princess”, Leticia van Mavis.

He had seen the Brave, who held monstrous strength, as she fought.

Compared to the speed of those attacks, these attacks won’t reach him. He only needed to hold out until backup arrived.[?3?]

Locke braced his legs to block the vice-captain’s blade with his shield— but then—

“Huh?”

From his arms, his legs, his whole body, the strength left him. [19]

With a clang, as the sword hit the shield, Locke was blown backwards.

“Gah...”

The air was knocked out of his lungs as he hit a tree behind him.

“Gyaaaaaaa!”

Though he was dazed, Locke was not knocked out. He rose to his knee as he heard a scream.

Tasting iron in his mouth, he looked towards the source of the scream.

There, his classmate was rolling on the ground, with his right arm cut off.

The other person was already impaled by the sword in his abdomen.

He couldn't see the other group of fighters.

While fighting, they had moved away.

However, he heard another scream.

It was most likely a cry of agony...

‘What... the heck...?’

“It is time.”

The vice-captain expressionlessly looked down towards Locke.

Unsteadily standing up, the shield in his left hand, and the sword in the right hand felt heavy to Locke.

“The magic power... I can't feel it?”

“Were you not told in class? One of the Imperial Capital Simurgh's protective

magic, Magic Sealing Barrier, was activated.”

Centered around the imperial capital Simurgh, were six towers, which could cast anti-magic power barrier magic using magic tools.

Anybody within the area surrounded by the six towers would have their magic power sealed, as a countermeasure against demons who can take in miasma as a source of magic power. The spell is one of the Remulshil Empire’s trump cards.

Having their magic power sealed, Locke and the others’ strengthening magic was forcibly dispelled.

“You planned to stall for time, but time has passed, and we have the upper hand. It was your miscalculation!”

He somehow blocked a sideswipe with his shield, but his body took the brunt of the force.

Two strikes, three strikes, he was pressured by the slashes.

“Kuh...”

Every time the shield was hit by the sword, Locke was pushed back.

“The reason nobles are so stuck-up, is because of their strengthening magic! With their magic power sealed, The royal knights and the imperial guards who protect the capital are not our match!”

With the magic power sealed, not only the demons, but the nobles would also be weakened.[20]

Due to their magical aptitude, they had been continually blessed by the strong protection of body reinforcement magic.

Therefore, against the veteran soldiers with only their physical abilities, they would win.

However, with their magic power sealed, it was different.

If both sides' magic power were sealed such as now, the knights who had continued to diligently train themselves everyday would be superior.

Now, the students, having their magic power sealed, were defeated in the blink of an eye.

It was also a matter of time before Locke was killed.

“Hah!”

“—tsu!”

At last, after enduring countless strikes, Locke's shield broke.

When his shield broke, the tip of the sword scratched his arm, and now blood dripped from his left arm.

“Come to think of it, Apprentice Knight Locke isn't a noble, but more or less a commoner. However, for this plan, all outsiders are a potential obstacle. Unfortunately, you will also have to die.”

Locke's sword dropped to the ground, and he crouched, holding his left arm.

His breathing rough and disorderly, he had already reached the limit of his stamina.

And yet, Locke continued to glare at the approaching vice-captain, but he had no more strength to reach for the sword.

Glaring once more at the figure standing before his eyes, with the sword raised overhead, Locke then lowered his head in resignation.

...

“... The capital is completely enclosed by the barrier.”

Leticia slowly looked around.

Because of one of the teachers, that day, Leticia had received instructions to come to the classrooms, knowing she was being invited.

A man stood before her.

In that room, she, the aged man, and children aged from 10 to twelve— the people who were admitted into knight school at the minimum age— only the children who were admitted this year were gathered.

“Apart from this seven-fold barrier formation sealing my magic power, are these children hostages, I wonder?”

“Don’t worry. We don’t want you to become an obstacle. It seems that even while being affected by the barrier spell, you are still clad in such strong magic power. Are you really human?”

Leticia didn’t answer.

She glared at the man clad in a black hood standing behind him.

“A demon, huh.”

“That~ is~ right~!”[21]

The demon responded, feigning foolishness.

“I am happy to have met the famous Brave-sama.”

“To even borrow the power of demons... the Empire’s heroes have stooped to quite a low level.”

The tone of Leticia’s voice became calm.

Contrary to the tone of her voice, she had an intimidating air.

Up until Leticia was born as the Brave, he had been a general who fought against the demons over the course of many years.

Now, as the principal of the knight school, Zaunasu showed a bitter smile.[? 4?]

“I am honoured that Brave-dono has called us heroes.”

‘I have retired from the front lines three years ago.’

‘In those three years, this young girl had been fighting demons for the Empire on the front lines.’

‘This is nothing but shameful.’

“Of the people who live in the Empire, there is nobody who doesn’t know of you. Especially if they had served in the army.”

With the four years Leticia spent fighting, she had protected the empire, and

ended the fighting on the front lines for ten times longer.

She was like a living legend to the empire.

“Honestly, I had no choice but to involve the demons in order not to lose[? 5?]. On that note, we couldn’t have a practical conversation with you. I plan to talk it out with you someday, but this was unfortunate.”dbl check

“Using the magic sealing barrier covering the capital, the noble knight’s magic power would be stolen. Then, were you going to use your superior physical abilities to take control?”[22]

“It is as you said, Leticia-kun.”

Zaunas replied.

His eyes glowed with affectionate praise for his wonderful subordinates.

For Zaunas, Leticia was the same age as his grandson would have been if he hadn’t been killed on the battlefield.

“Of course, we cannot overthrow the palace, but well, that’s not a problem. Our objective is not His Highness the Emperor.”

“Then, what do you want?”

“The eradication of the rotten knight order and nobility!”

Those words held a strong intent— and hatred.

“Look before you. The knights at this knight school are like eggs. The knights expected to be the future shields of the empire are in a disastrous state!”

Tightening his clenched fist, Zaunas grit his teeth as he forced out those words.

“My children and grandchildren all sacrificed their lives fighting demons and monsters. My subordinates, in order to protect their family and loved ones, died on the battlefield to protect them.”

‘But, for what?’

The knight order that had ordered them to their deaths was dominated by nobility, nobility whom had lived while wallowing in extravagance while countless knights and soldiers died.

While the proud and noble guardians of the empire, became covered in blood and dirt, they immersed themselves in the fragrance of women, while their mouths enjoyed fine liquor and delicacies that one would normally only be able to taste once in a lifetime. Those mouths were the same ones which ordered the deaths of those guardians.

‘For the sake of those who died protecting the empire’s people, I must eradicate the corruption.’

‘So that those guardians and the people can leave this world in peace.’

‘That was all.’

“Now, the imperial capital Simurgh is affected by the large scale magic sealing barrier. The aristocratic knights who rely on magic are no match for my subordinates.”

Zaunas's subordinates would be able to take control of the school, obviously, but also knight order headquarters, and the imperial court.

Quite a few people from the capital's knight order were dispatched onto the subjugation mission.

About now, Zaunas's subordinates from the fort would begin their surprise attack.

With their magic sealed, everybody in each group would have to fight with their own strength, and leadership ability.

Compared to the knights and nobles who lived in peace far removed from the front lines, Zaunas and his subordinates, who had survived constant battles, would not fall behind.

It was only a matter of time until they took control of all the capital's critical institutions.

"Until the capital is in the palm of my hands, you should just sit here obediently."

"I understand your feelings well. I sympathize with you. However, right here, among them, are also people who sincerely believe in becoming a knight and protecting the empire."

"Like your Master?"

Zaunas faced Leticia with a gentle smile.

"You are speaking of Cadet Wynn, right? I know of how hard he works, spending every day studying and training. However, if he were still alive, he wouldn't be able to become a knight."

“The apprentice knights, and some knight cadets, they’re carrying out the subjugation mission near the fort where one of the barrier magic installations are. What will happen to those who participated in the mission?”

At that question, Zaunas merely closed his eyes.

“Even if they are students, they can at least use swords and magic, so they may become obstacles to our goal.”

“Is that so...”

Leticia let out a small mutter, while slowly reaching for the sword at her waist.

The sword let out a slight glow, despite being within the magic sealing barrier, while she let out a strong atmosphere of intimidation.

It was the holy sword gifted by the goddess Anastasia.

“Incredible~. To be able to move even from within our barrier... Frightening. Truly frightening.[23]”

The demon in the black hood acted exaggeratedly with mock surprise, hiding himself behind Zaunas’s back.

If it were a normal existence, being inside the seven-fold barrier formation would make the whole body feel heavy, unable to move.

However, Leticia’s movements defied nature itself.

“Even so, being trapped within the barrier, you won’t be able to defeat this general-san, yanno[24]?”

Cackling, he peeked at Leticia from behind Zaunas's back.

“With your beloved Master among the dead, could it be, that you got mad~?”[25]

The Brave whose master was killed would turn her force towards both the ringleaders, and the nobles around them.

Then, even if the plan fails, the noble's downfall would still definitely succeed.

At first he and his subordinates were merely going to carry out this plan.

With the black-hooded demon's suggested modifications, the Brave would surely be criticized in the ages to come.[?6?]

In addition, the other nations would also pile criticisms at the very empire who had roused the Brave's anger.

If the empire weakened, it might be invaded,

However, with the empire's power rapidly decreasing, it would fall to ruin one way or another.

With that facing them, it was necessary for the heart of the country to be purged.

For that reason, many of those near the border, who had received Zaunas's education, tried to stay uninvolved.

They would have to gain time until the heart of the country had been purified and reformed.

“It was I who handed down the order for your master, Cadet Wynn, to be killed.”

However, in response to Zaunas's words—

“Fufu....ahahaha”

Leticia's cold expression broke into sudden laughter.

The murderous air of intimidation she gave off also vanished, and the person who kept on laughing was only a beautiful lady.

Suddenly, upon seeing the laughing Brave, the children who were crying in fear, stopped crying in surprise, and looked at her.

“What's so funny!?”

Dumbfoundedly looking at Leticia from behind Zaunas, the demon in the black hood leaned out further with slight irritation in his voice.

“Fufu... Magic sealing barrier, is it? Certainly, the nobles and you demons would be affected. Actually, since you are a demon, you can't even feel strong magic power.”

Leticia spoke with amusement.

“Hey, all of you. Have you heard the titles I was given as the Brave?”

“Eh...?”

Casually turning around with a smiling face, she asked the bewildered children.

“Hey hey, have you gone crazy from the shock?”

“Why the sudden change? Leticia-kun?”

However, Leticia ignored Zaunas and the black-hooded demon, crouching down to the students.

“Umm... ‘The one closest to god’ and ‘Divine Sword Princess’?”

A ten-year-old boy met her gaze, and answered with a slight blush.

“Yes, that’s right. ‘Divine Sword Princess’.”

Leticia smiled warmly at the boy, then slowly stood up.

“Sir Zaunas, the reason I call Knight Cadet Wynn my Master, do you know why?”

Her back to him, Leticia’s voice once again grew cold as she spoke to Zaunas.

“If I remember correctly... I heard that, as childhood friends, you learned the sword from him?”

“Yes. However, did you think that I would call him Master for just that?”

Slowly, Leticia turned around.

She held up the blade that slew a demon lord, the “Holy Spirit Blade Eluna Blade” in her right hand in front of her.

“The nickname “Divine Sword Princess” was given to me by the Sword Saint Raul Holt Leon, whose strength falls far short of mine.”

She closed her eyes, and smiled again.

As for Zaunas, though she was a girl that would be around his grandson’s age, he unwittingly became fascinated with her beauty.

Rather, it wasn’t only Zaunas.

The classroom fell silent upon Leticia’s calm voice, even the demon in the black hood, as if spellbound by Leticia’s atmosphere.[26]

“Four years ago, when I set off as the Brave, I had never been defeated, Not even once. Other than...”

Opening her eyes again, she faced Zaunas.

She lowered her sword, her right hand hanging by her side.

The Seven-fold Barrier Magic Array was supposed to make one’s whole body feel like they were bound by chains, but she moved so lightly as if she didn’t feel it.

Her movements were natural.

Then, Leticia showed a smile of a girl in love.

Anybody would undoubtedly be surprised and charmed by that smile.

“Against that me, only one single person, without magic, whom I could not win against. Even now, I would only win if I used magic. That is why, I call him—

Onii-chan— Master.”

...

Locke hung his head, facing the ground.

The vice-captain decided to strike with a blow to the head to reduce the suffering, but suddenly, he showed a perplexed expression.

It was because Locke’s shoulders were shaking slightly.

“Ha, hahaha...”

Holding his injured left arm, Locke let out a dry laugh.

“Aiming to buy time, huh...Certainly, our aims differed little, but...”

“What is it? Do you have any last words? It is the end for you. Do you want them heard?”

“Well, no...”

Locke continued to chuckle[27].

“I just understood pain. To see that change, it truly is a monster.”

Locke looked up.

“As expected of ‘The Master of the Brave’.”

In his gaze was—

“Vice-captain!”

His subordinate urgently warned him.

“What!?”

When he looked behind him, he saw somebody imitating a knight draw near while letting out an explosive amount of killing intent.

With any magic power sealed, body strengthening magic should have been dispelled.

However, that speed far surpassed Locke’s — no, everybody’s speed.

“Wha-What is this!?”

He turned around and begun to slash at Wynn, who was approaching at an unbelievable speed, but due to his astonishment, his swing was too wide.

Due to that, Wynn’s blade sunk into his virtually undefended right torso.

“Vice-captain!”

With an unbelieving expression on his face, he turned around to face Wynn, who had run past him.

Wynn stood in front of the kneeling Locke, his knight’s sword ready.

The vice-captain opened and closed his mouth twice, thrice, then fell forward.

“You bastard!”

The two other knights who had neutralized the students were incensed, and attacked him.

One person swung his sword downward, while the other stabbed at him.

However—

“Huh?”

“He vanished!?”

Wynn dropped down, dodging the slash and darted around the slashing knight’s left side, using the shield’s blind spot, then kicked the shield.

“Uwah!?”

The knight who was kicked went flying into the other knight, destroying both their stances.

They picked up their swords which had fallen to the ground, and when they turned back—

Wynn’s sword beheaded the knight.[28]

Wynn leapt over the corpse, which was spurting blood as it fell, and closed in on the last surviving knight.

“Shi-, shit.”

With an awkward stance, and no strength in his sword, Wynn's sword flickered—

Wynn's sword thrust at the base of his neck.

Chapter 21: Master and Student

“Oi, Wynn. In front of you...”

Faster than Locke could speak, with an explosive sound as he stepped, Wynn instantly accelerated.

“Wha-, what?”

“Where did he come from?”

Panicked, a pair of soldiers jabbed at him with their spears.

Without slowing down, he dodged the spear tips with small sidesteps.

In that moment, while the soldier’s weapons were extended, he slashed upwards at the defenseless soldiers’ sides into their chests.

“Shi-, shit.”

Another soldier drew his sword and tried to slash at him, but the bodies of his comrades killed by Wynn’s blade prevented him from attacking.

While the soldier was occupied, Wynn stabbed him from behind the corpses.

As the point struck the soldier in the chest, piercing through his heart, the light died from the soldier’s eyes.

As the blade was pulled out, the body fell forward.

A pool of blood spread onto the rocky ground, and the surroundings smelled

of blood.

It was done all in a moment.

It was before the sentry soldiers had time to recover from their surprise and call for reinforcements.

Locke could only watch all this happen from behind.

Taking into account the fact that his magic power sealed by the “Magic Sealing Barrier”, Locke was completely surprised by Wynn’s nonsensical physical abilities.

Being evenly matched with those who use body strengthening magic, Locke realized that this was extraordinary.

Moreover, at that moment, with virtually everybody, friend and foe alike, unable to use magic, he realized that common sense had been overturned.

“Now there is nobody else anymore. Let’s go, Locke.”

After checking around the bend, Wynn started running.

Though he was thinking ‘I wasn’t really needed,’ Locke followed after Wynn.

Though he trained himself, without magic to strengthen him, Locke’s physical abilities were slightly better than an average soldier.

Wynn, who had joined up with Locke, proposed to go to the capital alone, while he should run and hide somewhere.[1]

However, Locke rejected the proposal.

It was reasonable.

Since Locke also wanted to become a knight.

To run away as Wynn suggested, as a friend, and as a comrade, he wouldn’t do it.

Wynn recognized his indomitable will, and gave in.

Wynn didn’t say another word about Locke’s refusal to temporarily flee.

If Wynn truly wanted, he could have left Locke behind in the blink of an eye, but instead, he matched Locke's pace as they advanced.

It wasn't like he was worried about him or anything.[2]

When asked about his reason for doing so, he replied that slowing down to a normal speed would allow him to take any enemies by surprise.

Certainly, after recently seeing a step able to propel him over ten paces in an instant, Locke believed that he could engage the enemy head on, and kill them before they could react.

This was what would normally happen when an ordinary knight faced off against a common soldier.

As they moved through the forest, Wynn told Locke about how he defeated the dangers that Locke and the other apprentice knights faced.

As Wynn recounted his story, Locke followed several steps behind him.

The total amount of Wynn's magic power was far less than an average human's.

The average commoner could still use spells like "Light", "Firelight", and elementary level defensive magic, but to create more than just fire or ice, but to use explosions or frost to occur in attack magic requires a large amount of magic power, and the average commoner could only try, before they would lose consciousness from running out of magic power. That was why his grades in the magic classes were abysmal.

This was a handicap for him, who wanted to become a knight.

In a battlefield, magical combat was indispensable.

When a battle breaks out, the royal court magicians would chant ritual magic and cast magic for large-scale destruction and wide-area barriers. Meanwhile,

catapults would fire incessantly in the downtime, then the knights would rain magic and the archers would fire arrows.

On a large-scale battlefield, Wynn would be useless as a knight.

That was why he aimed to become a knight by entering knight school.

Many of the knights from the knight school were assigned to the Imperial Guard Knight Order, or the Royal Knight Order.

Though the imperial guards and royal knights were grouped together, there were actually differences between them.

Eminent nobles made up the Imperial Guard Knight Order.

On the other hand, the lower-ranked nobles and those from knight houses made up the Royal Knight Order.

Wynn's goal, was the latter, the Royal Knight Order.

Unlike the Imperial Guard Knight Order, which needed connections to join and whose quality seemed to be deteriorating, the Royal Knight Order was made of the most elite knights.

The duties of the royal knights were of a larger breadth than the imperial guards, whose duty was to guard the imperial family. They served as the main line of defense for the palace and the capital.

At the center of the empire, they gathered intelligence, and also undertook escort missions of VIPs.

Their battlefield was the capital city, but there sometimes were times when they made use of their advanced education to infiltrate hostile areas.

Therefore, when they left for their battlefields, they weren't clumsy.

They weren't a force meant for large-scale battles, but were a knight order

which made use of their individual fighting strength.

Though they didn't escort the imperial family, the royal knight order, which occasionally escorted important state guests, was not an order one could enter with half-baked strength.

It was a very selective knight order.

Wynn had no other alternative than to aim for that place.

The inability to use magic was a large handicap for him.

Wynn had lost to long-range magic attacks since his first year examination.

So for the next examination one year later, he perfected a countermeasure.

"I, who has understood the way of fire, Fireball!"

When he decided that he wouldn't be able to catch up, the vice-captain cast attack magic.

It was a well-used spell in the battlefield: when it hit the target, as it exploded, flames would spread. It was an attack magic with high killing potential.

As Wynn moved, as swift as the wind, unaffected by the bad terrain, he looked back as he heard the chant and felt the heat behind him.

His left hand flashed quickly.

A silver light cut through the air.

It was the same attack that had intrigued the vice-captain when the demonic beast had attacked.

Fundamentally, in the central part of the spell, was was something like a core, which, if hit, would have an effect.

In this case, the fireball would blow up, causing an explosion.

The silver light Wynn had launched — the short-sword Leticia had presented him with— flew into the fireball, as if it were absorbed.

In the next moment, flames burst out as the explosion boomed.

“Gah!”

Receiving the shock of the explosion from a close range, beginning with the vice-captain, the three knights were blown away, and hit the ground.

As the explosion subsided, the three men were on the ground, groaning.

Their legs were bent in impossible directions, and though they weren't dead, blood flowed from their heads.

In order to escape from the explosion, as he threw the short-sword, at the same time, he dove into a ditch.

He approached the fallen knights.

The short-sword was stuck in a tree some ways off.

Despite having been hit with an explosion of that level, the short-sword Leticia had given him was not even covered with soot, and continued to give off a faint luminescence.

He returned the short-sword to the scabbard at his waist, and began running.

‘Near the fourth group is Locke’s group, the third group.’

‘It shouldn’t be only my group that ended up in this situation.’

Locke and Cornelia should still be defending against their attacks.

‘Estimating the time it would take for this plan of action, I should be able to save Locke in the third group.’

Wynn left, leaping lightly with energetic movements.

While he had saved up for the tuition by acting as an adventurer, he had gotten used to moving through places with bad footing.

Along the way, he felt an uncomfortable feeling, but he kept running without paying any attention to it. Right then, he was just in time to see Locke about to be killed.[?1?]

...

“At any rate, I think it was good that you came at that point.”

“It was thanks to you, Locke, that I realized magic was sealed. They ended relaxing their guard.”

“But well, something will soon be attracted to this smell...”

Locke patted his injured left arm and grimaced at the smell coming from his body.

His left arm was already wrapped in bandages, thanks to Wynn.

As the only survivors, they hurried to the fort to find out what had happened.

At the plaza in front of the entrance to the fort, where they had practiced camping the night before, lay two corpses.

They were Nigel and Irsu.

They were the knights who acted as the captains of the periodic subjugation mission.

“Now what do we do?”

“First of all, we should sabotage the magic amplifying device.”

They were hidden among the thickets as they surveyed the fort.

The drawbridge that led to the gate was raised, so a frontal infiltration seemed difficult.

Two soldiers stood guard from a window above the gate.

“Locke, this way.”

Wynn gestured, and stealthily moved towards the fort while hiding in the thickets.

While hiding from the patrolling soldiers and guards along the way, Wynn reached the moat surrounding the fort.

“I wasn’t just pretending to be an adventurer on the surface, I had to hide from monsters many times, you know?”

Wynn whispered with a proud expression on his face upon Locke’s admiration at his ability to discern well-hidden locations.

“Since they also can’t use magic here, we’re lucky that they can’t use any detection magic.”

That is why they tried to isolate themselves from all outsiders.

Soon, Wynn pointed towards an opening in the fort's walls.

"We'll get in from there."

"What? But that's—"

"It is where the kitchen waste is thrown into the river."[3]

"Ewww...."

The amount of trash produced by a fort that often held a thousand people was not trivial.

Some of the waste could be used as fertilizer within the fort, but most of it was just thrown into the river, as is.

"There is another garbage chute, but..."

"...Let's go with the kitchen waste one please."

Fortunately, none of them had any heavy armaments.

They swam across the river, and climbed the stone wall into the chute.

"Ewww... it's slimy..."

“Please bear with it.”

“This is nice and all, but how did you know about this place?”

“Every summer, for a fortnight[4], I participate in the training that happens at the fort. I always work to clean this place.”

“Wow... It must be hard to clean this place in the summer...”

When it gets warmer, insects swarm and the stench is especially terrible.

Due to his experience at the on-site training during the summertime, he seriously doubted that anybody would clean this sort of place.

Only commoners like Wynn, would clean it when he came every year.

Normally, there were hired servants who would do it, but in this situation, he believed that there wouldn't be any more of them in the fort.

‘They were probably all fired,’ Wynn thought.

As expected, there were no human presences in the fort's kitchen.

Though there should have been some sort of detection magic guarding from the outside, it seemed that the magic sealing barrier had neutralised it.

They probably didn't have enough personnel to guard every place.

Luckily, for that reason, no knights or soldiers approached this place.

The first thing they did after climbing out of the chute was to search for a cloth to wipe the slime off of their bodies.

As expected, even Wynn was slightly grossed out by that sort of thing.[5]

Exiting the kitchen, they accidentally met two patrolling soldiers, but after

that, they had stealthily moved through the fort.

Their goal was to disrupt the magic amplification device.

Wynn didn't judge whether or not the insurgents of coup d'état were in the right.

However, they were going to kill the all the students, including him and Locke.
[?2?]

Due to that, Wynn saw them as an irreconcilable enemy.

Upon seeing his friend almost killed, he couldn't find any more reason to forgive them.

The one with the largest war potential in Imperial Capital Simurgh, Leticia, would probably also have taken measures against the insurgent faction.

If Wynn understood Leticia's full strength from the rumours, they might pose no threat to her, but having her magic sealed would still be harsh for her.[6]

However, whether or not her magic is unsealed, if it's Leticia, she should somehow manage.

"Mu!? You bastards!"

"Hey, we've been discovered. Wynn!"

"I got it!"

Not unexpectedly, they were discovered as they climbed the staircase.

At the pointed, investigative voice, Locke's feet instantly stopped, but Wynn had sped up.

However, Wynn's feet also stopped after a while.

“Instructor Aldo... ..”

“Cadet Wynn.”

There stood the man who had guided him for one short month.

“You really ended up being our final obstacle.”

A faint smile appeared on his face.

“I heard the situation from the slain knights in the forest. But, why did you have to also kill the students!?”

“...Anybody who can wield a weapon, though they may be students, could become a threat. We had already decided to do this when we began our plan.”

“If we were to be rendered powerless, there should have been another way.”

If the knight instructors took off their equipment, the students would also take off theirs.

Moreover, they could have just surrounded and captured them.

“That was one of our objectives, Cadet Wynn. Your life has significance. If you died, that ‘Brave’ would undoubtedly become incensed. To where would that wrath be directed? Towards we who caused it to happen— the imperial knight order.”[7]

“... That... is certainly true...”

Locke reflexively agreed.

Seeing as Leticia adored Wynn so much, if he died, her wrath would definitely be directed towards them.

The problem was, it might not affect only the knight order, but probably affect the whole empire.

“In order to create the smallest scapegoat possible, this plan was refined. Right now, we can no longer pull back, so we must eliminate any possible obstacles to the plan.”

The knights and soldiers pointed their spear tips and blades at Wynn and Locke.

“The plan has already started! With the magic sealed, the last part is for them to experience it! We, the true knights, will make those pigs, who indulge in luxury without fighting, taste the extent of our power! Even if our enemies be students and children, and even the man the Brave calls ‘Master!’ ”

Aldo shouted out instructions to the soldiers.

Simultaneously, the soldiers stabbed out with their spears.

As the spear-tips approached, Wynn swung his sword.

The spear-tips in his blade’s path were cut off, and went flying, leaving only wooden sticks.

“True Knights!? The type of knight I aspire to be aren’t like you guys!”

Wynn leapt among the knights, as if he were performing a sword dance.

Wherever the blade flashed, blood sprayed from the soldiers' hands that held the spears and swords.

"Locke, we're breaking through! I leave the rear to you!"

"O-, okay!"

He decided not to retreat backwards, but advance upwards.

He paid no heed to the cries of pain from the knights and soldiers as he sliced off their hands, and slashed at their torsos.

There were people who bore the pain to pursue and assault Wynn, but Locke suppressed them.

Their movements dulled by injuries, Locke could overwhelm them.

Meanwhile, Wynn continued his bloody blade dance.

The blade slipped through the ineffectual spear-tips coming from all directions.

"We miscalculated, Sir..."

Aldo also drew a sword.

In order to fight the aristocratic knights and take over the capital's key institutions, they sealed magic, and used the very best people.

One person, in front of their eyes, ferociously swinging his sword, the student who so aspired to become a knight, exceeded their calculations.

He had seen it during training.

The one able to defeat a magically strengthened opponent.

After having their own magic sealed, against Wynn, who had never used magic in the first place, they had weakened themselves.

Seeing how Wynn fought from up close, he could see traces of the Brave fighting, which he had seen from afar.

Before he knew it, Wynn and Locke had broken through the mass of knights and soldiers, and now stood before him.

If he looked around, the groans of the wounded soldiers were the only things audible.

Blood dripped from Wynn's blade, and his whole body was dyed a deep crimson from the blood.

Creating that gruesome scene, a single student had overwhelmed veteran knights.

"What I want to be is a knight that protects the powerless! I don't want to be a knight that only resolves things with force like you guys!"

While breathing heavily, Wynn forced his voice out.

That sharp glint in his eye pierced Aldo.

Wynn had not known that Leticia had saved the world as the Brave.

'Onii-chan, Onii-chan.'

The girl who had always walked behind him, following him, was assigned a mission to save the world, and at the end of the arduous, bitter journey, she

slew the Demon Lord.

After she slew the Demon Lord, it should have become peaceful.

But despite that—

Right now, a tremendous amount of blood was being shed all over the place.

Though the Brave should have brought about peace, even now, blood was being shed.

“I am not like Leti, who can protect many people. However, I want to become a knight that can protect the people within my reach! It will happen sometime! In a different way than your methods!”

Wynn exclaimed as he leapt.

‘A straightforward attack!’

In only a month of practice, he had observed the swordplay that had ended his subordinate’s lives.

By casting away shields and armour, it was a sword technique that focused on speed.

‘If that is the case, then kill the speed.’

Though the speed was fueled by fury, it was a straightforward attack—extremely easy to read.

Defending Wynn’s strike with his shield, he slashed while Wynn wasn’t

moving.

Aldo used his experience to predict the trajectory of Wynn's blade, then prepared his shield.

And Wynn's blade arced in the trajectory Aldo predicted.

'I'll receive it!'

Deflecting the sword with his shield, his sword stabbed out from behind the shield.

Flicking away the sword, the point moved vigorously towards the weakened Wynn's head— instead of flesh, the point of the sword pierced through empty air.

Wynn took a low stance as his sword moved towards Aldo's chest, who still had his sword held out..

There was no time to bring back his shield.

Having put all his strength into his own stab, it was impossible to evade this attack.

At that moment, Aldo saw Wynn's pupils.

There was no more unbridled fury, only calm composure in his eyes.

'An unrecognized genius... huh.'

Aldo instantly felt the blow piercing his chest, and then Aldo lost his consciousness for eternity.

In a room twenty meters wide. [8]

In the center, a black lithograph floated in the air.[9]

It was engraved with closely packed magic words, and below the floating lithograph similar magic words were etched, forming the magic formation.

Though there weren't any windows, the lithograph and magic formation emitted a pale blue light, illuminating the room.

There were six forts centered around the capital.

On each of their highest floors, identical magic formations and lithographs were installed.

In cases of emergency, these devices would be activated, and the magic of the empire's magic users would be amplified.

Right now, it was using this, that the Magic Sealing Barrier was cast over the capital, and that the Seven-fold Barrier Formation was used to seal the Brave.

Wynn and Locke stood there, bathed in the luminescence of the lithograph and the formation,

"In the end, we must depend on Leti."

Neither Wynn nor Locke had any strength.

However, not Leticia.

As a duke's daughter, and as the most-celebrated Brave.

"It can't be helped. Being so far from the capital, we can only do this much."

Locke placed his hand on Wynn's shoulder.

"That's right. Compared to saving the world, she really was dragged into something foolish."

‘Now, I wonder what Leticia is thinking, while in this confrontation.’

Wynn swung his sword down onto the lithograph.

His blade chipping due to repeated overuse, Wynn used his sword to smash the lithograph, and the magic formation at his feet stopped glowing.

“Sorry, Leti. I entrust the rest to you.”

‘It’s alright. Leave it to me, Onii-chan.’

Wynn felt like he heard Leticia’s voice whisper in his ear.

“... It’s alright. Leave it to me, Onii-chan.”

Smiling, Leticia closed her eyes.

She suddenly felt her magic power return.

“Wha!? The barrier is gone?”

“Eeh!? How could it be? What are they doing, your subordinates~?”

The sense of weariness that recently enveloped her body grew weaker, and vanished, as if it were a lie.

The magic power had returned.

“Who sabotaged the device...?”

“... Onii-chan did it.”

Leticia quietly replied.

With that, a sudden storm of magic power assaulted Zaunas and the Black-hooded demon.

“Gu-, Guh...”

“A-, a-, aaah”

Unable to even breathe, oppressive atmosphere was more intense than those he had felt while traversing tens of thousands of battlefields.

It all came from a girl standing ten-odd paces away.

She was wrapped in a golden shine as magic leaked from her body.

It was the “Brave,” Leticia van Mavis.

There stood the girl that became a legend.

Suddenly, Zaunas felt the wind.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

From behind Zaunas, a shriek erupted in the room.

“Wha!?”

Turning around, the black-hooded demon was impaled onto the wall.

Leticia slowly drew her sword.

With a slight sound, the black-hooded demon melted into black dust and vanished.

‘So like this—’[?3?]

He couldn’t see it at all.

Praised as a hero, his own eyes couldn’t even follow it.

So this is, “The one closest to god,” who had defeated the Demon King, Leticia van Mavis!

“I will never forgive you for involving Onii-chan. However, I sympathise with you.”

Taking her eyes off the now-vanished demon, she faced Zaunas.

Zaunas recovered from his surprise, taking deep breaths.

‘My body is heating up.’

He felt exhilaration from facing a strong opponent after several years.

“It is an honour to fight the Brave once in my life’s final moments ”

Drawing his sword, he stood at ready.

“I promise. Certainly, I will not interfere further.”

“Is that so. Now, please convey your thoughts.”

Leticia returned Zaunas’s smile.

“Let’s go! Leticia van Mavis!”

With a piercing scream, Zaunas swung his greatsword at Leticia.

Handed down for generations through his family, it was a powerful magic sword.

Of course, it fell short of the holy sword, but even then, it was still a sharp sword.

He poured all his magic power, and his whole spirit into one blow—

“Gah...!?”

The sword was knocked away, and with it, Zaunas was blown several meters back.

Without any defensive actions[10], he hit the ground.

He had no idea what happened.

It all happened in an instant.

Enduring the pain, using the greatsword as a support, he rose to his knee.

“Impos...sible, for it to be this...”

His face twisted in agony, he looked at Leticia.

She who held the title of Brave had not taken one step from that spot.

He understood.

She had simply brushed off the attack to which Zaunas had devoted himself.

It was only that.

Somehow righting himself, he stood on his knees.

Among the people who were watching their battle, the children, Zaunas's subordinates, not one sound leaked out. They were unable to believe their eyes.

“Here I go.”

Holding her sword towards his chest, Leticia quietly spoke.

“Come!”

Staggering to his feet, Zaunas raised a war cry.

Compared to the many enemies he had faced on the battlefields, Leticia held overwhelming strength.

With minimal movements and the fastest attack— among the battles Zaunas had fought up until then, he now thrust forth, faster and stronger than he had ever done in his lifetime.

However, Leticia dodged with almost no movement.

Seeing that he had resolved to die, Leticia let loose a slash.

The blade approached his body.

He was satisfied he had crossed blades with the strongest opponent at the

end of his life.

The man who had served the empire for four decades entrusted the duty to the next generation, and fell into a long sleep.[11]

“Sheathe your swords.”

It wasn't a loud voice.

Nevertheless, the clear voice reverberated.

They were at the plaza in front of the castle gate.

The imperial guards and the insurgent knights faced off.

Relying on the firm gate, the imperial guards were pinned down by the coup d'état faction, but when they realized the magic sealing barrier had vanished, they advanced.

The insurgent knights who were inferior in magic and numbers, were at a disadvantage there in front of the palace.

Though each of the forces in the institutions were damaged, having been unable to take total control of the capital, they were headed for defeat.

In that moment, a single girl suddenly appeared between both sides.

Many eyes beheld the figure of Leticia the Brave.

The Brave who should still have been young and immature.

However, she emitted an intense presence.

By merely standing there, the place felt like an inviolable, sacred place.

“I have killed the ringleader of this incident, Zaunas, with my blade. I will

permit no more bloodshed from this point on.”

“However, Brave-sama. They have pointed their blades at the empire. To overlook that—”

“Silence please!”

Leticia turned to face the imperial guard knight commander who who had spoken up.

“From this point on, anybody who wants to fight will have me as their opponent. Do both of you have the resolve?”

She slowly moved her gaze around.

Both sides were completely swallowed by Leticia’s presence.

Confirming that there were no more movements, Leticia gave a small sigh.

‘When we were small, the knights in the stories we read were champions of justice who defended the weak.’

However, in reality, storybook knights were not to be found.

Self-interested, those trampled over others without batting an eye were rampant, while the knights who sincerely worried for the country were dead. And now, blood was shed in order to avenge them.

Leticia lifted her eyes from the insurgents, who had resigned and released their arms, and looked to the sky.

While thinking of Wynn, who was somewhere under this vast sky—

‘The knights of our dreams, where are they? Onii-chan...’

Leticia sorrowfully lamented in her heart.

Chapter 22: Epilogue - Master of the Brave

It was in the Cliffdorf estate at the imperial capital.

Many luxurious carriages were lined up before the gate, and from within them, noblemen all filed into the estate.

In the hall, an orchestra the marquis hired performed, while extravagant dishes and delicacies were served on a buffet table.

The table was also lavishly decorated with fresh flowers, giving off a resplendent image.

The dressed-up men and women engaged in small talk, and danced to the orchestra's music, as waiters moved among them, offering the guests wine and juice.

There was a banquet at the Cliffdorf residence.

They were celebrating the prevention of the coup d'état, and the captain of the knight order and the generals had arranged it.

At the center of the banquet hall.

There, Jade was surrounded by the nobles who were part of the Cliffdorf faction.

"Jade-dono, were you promoted for having saved Her Highness the Imperial Princess?"

"As expected of General Cliffdorf's son. The family is peerless."

“Truly so. Also, the empire is safe again.”

Surrounded by the flattering smiles and comments of the nobles around him, Jade looked down at the glass of wine in his hand.

“No, no, I was able to rescue Her Highness the Imperial Princess, but I didn’t liberate the capital. I have come to realize that I am powerless.”

“In those circumstances, there was no way you could have done that. Rather, for even only having saved Her Highness the Imperial Princess, you deserve a substantial reward.”

Jade showed a relieved expression as the nobles surrounding him unanimously affirmed that statement.

“Since everybody is saying such things, I feel relieved from the bottom of my heart[1]. As I am still inexperienced, from now on, I will continue to respect everybody’s guidance.”

‘Those imbeciles!’

Contrary to his words and expression, Jade scorned the nobles in his mind.

‘Well, this imbecilic way of using flattery can still be used.’

At most, as they went around praising the Cliffdorf House, good rumours would also spread.

In this event, Jade was to be celebrated for having promptly rescued and sheltered the First Princess Cornelia Raul Cole Remulshil from the coup d’état faction.

“Not good, not good.”[2]

“Please calm down. Father.”

Jade frowned as he watched his father, Marquis Welt van Cliffdorf, on his feet, pacing back and forth.

They had successfully taken custody of Cornelia and were headed to the Cliffdorf’s vacation estate.

As they had summoned their knights to receive the princess, they received news that the coup was suppressed.

“Why!? They had occupied the fort. They activated the magic-sealing barrier.They would gain control of all of the empire’s institutions. Everything would have succeeded, but why did the coup fail?”

“Somehow, that Brave Mavis, intervened.”[3]

“The Brave intervened in a fight between humans!? Shouldn’t the Brave have been watched, or otherwise kept in check by the Seven-fold barrier formation? I thought they had used a demon! That incompetent Zaunas!”[4]

It was Welt, though his subordinates, who had introduced the black-hooded demon to Zaunas, who had feared the Brave’s intervention. [5]

Trusting in his subordinates, and not knowing that Welt had intervened, Zaunas was manipulated into using the the demon’s Seven-fold Barrier Formation as the countermeasure to the Brave that he was searching for.

Of course, Zaunas needed enough determination to borrow the strength of

his mortal enemies, the demons.

After hesitating for a while, he borrowed the power of the demon, in order to check the strength of the Brave, Leticia van Mavis.

However, they were still unable to seal her with that much.

“We stayed on the sidelines, knowing the insurgents were gathering an army! Furthermore, using Princess Cornelia, we would have an excuse to attack the capital!”

After the insurgents harmed the imperial family, he could say that he raised an army by using under Princess Cornelia’s banner.

But with only an excuse, the Cliffdorf House would lose influence.

However, unlike the impatient Welt, Jade wore a slight smile.

“That’s not it, Father. I had taken Princess Cornelia into our protection.”

“What are you saying?”

“They can’t prove that we had any advance information about the coup d’état. At any rate, the ringleader was the empire’s hero, Sir Zaunas. I was in the same group as the princess, secretly guarding the princess, and protected her from the insurgents. And then, we raised an army.”

“However, will Her Highness consent?”

“I guess so... Then we should hold a banquet.”

“Banquet?”

“That’s right. At the suggestion of Father, the Knight Order Commander, we will invite those who were meritorious.”

“You mean, Brave Mavis, too?”

“We had sheltered Her Highness Cornelia, and raised an army to liberate the capital, but the Brave had quelled the rebellion first. When we invite Brave Mavis to the banquet, you, Father, will congratulate her along with the Princess. This will give the other nobles, and the populace the impression that we, the Cliffdorf House, worked alongside the Brave.”

In the end, Welt approved of Jade’s plan and held a banquet.

Thanks to their prior knowledge of the coup, the nobles of the marquis faction, and those belonging to the military did not come to any real harm.

On the other hand, their rivals, especially the Reinhardt Marquisate, which had lost their eldest son, had been weakened.

In this incident, many influential people lost their lives.

Though it wasn’t the best outcome for the Cliffdorf marquisate, it was an acceptable outcome.

The only problem was to explain why the Cliffdorf House was the only faction who didn’t sustain any substantial harm.

Despite this, there would be no influential people in the other weakened factions who could pursue the matter.

But they still had to pay attention to this matter.

Inviting the Brave and the royalty to the banquet would cement the perception of the Cliffdorf as the foundation of the empire.

Due to the subordinate nobles, they had skillfully manipulated the perceptions.

Jade took a sip of the wineglass that he was looking at, and then greeted the arriving nobles with a refreshing smile.

It wasn't just the principal nobles, but the nobles of allied nations were also present—

“Oh! Your Highness!”

A loud voice echoed through the hall.

Everybody's eyes moved to the entrance of the hall.

Smiling as he entered, it was the 11th generation Emperor of the Remulshil Empire, Alexei Raul Lute Remulshil.

His daughter, Cornelia accompanied him.

The organizer of the banquet, Welt, hastened to kneel down and bow before the two.

Taking that cue, the whole hall knelt down.

“It is our highest honour to receive Your Highness at our mansion.”

“Umu. It is because your son has helped Our[6] daughter. When the father of that hero invited us, We couldn't not go.”

“I am delighted to hear such gracious words. I am sure that the Princess was also worried by this incident.”

“No... Thanks to the Marquis, I was not injured.”

Cornelia bowed.

She used her willpower to maintain her smile.

It was clear to Cornelia that they had tried to expand their influence using the coup d'état, but Marquis Cliffdorf persistently insisted that he merely intended to shelter the princess and raised an army to retake the capital.

The fact that all of the nobles of Marquis Cliffdorf's faction returned to their territories during the revolt, while the nobles of their rival faction was harmed, was clearly unnatural, but nobody was able to pursue the matter.

“This evening, the people assembled here have rendered distinguished service. Please extend your thanks to them, Your Highness.”

“Is that so...”

Maintaining her smile, Cornelia wanted to immediately take her eyes off of this man.

“That is so. Let us leave these matters for later. You may all stand. You have taken great pains in preparing this banquet. You may all enjoy yourselves.”

Bowing once more at Alexei's words, they all stood.

The hall became filled with sound.

Welt raised his hands, and the orchestra that had stopped playing when Alexei entered began playing again, filling the hall with music.

Welt nodded, satisfied, and turned towards Alexei and Cornelia.

Ignoring the plodding Welt, who continued to greet people, Cornelia quickly glanced around the room.

She had been told that Wynn and Locke survived, but since then, Cornelia, having been shut inside the castle, was unable to meet them.

At the banquet, she had heard that many of the people who had played a big role were invited.

That was why, the ten or so students who survived the subjugation mission were invited, or so she heard.

In her group, apart from her, there were no more than four students who survived.

Though they should have been in that hall, but she couldn't see the figures of Wynn and Locke.

Before she knew it, Cornelia was surrounded by nobles coming to greet her one by one.

They wanted to make connections with the person who was second in line to the throne.

There were also nobles who introduced their sons to her.

Listening to those flowery words, in which their intentions were plainly visible, she struggled to maintain her deteriorating smile with all her will, while searching for a glimpse of those two through the gaps in the crowd.

“Hey, why are we here in a place like this?”

“Isn't it pretty much because we survived? At least you look fine, Locke. But with this being my first time, what should I do?”

“You ninny[7]. If you want to become a knight, experiencing this sort of place is a must, no? Well, did you think it was fine just to study diligently?”

The students that had survived the subjugation mission.

Including Wynn and Locke, four people from their group survived, but several students from the groups deployed to the fort also survived.

That was why they were invited to the banquet.

Though they were students, they were also nobles.

Only by obtaining the appropriate clothes, Locke was making acquaintances with the nobles.

Also, Locke was the son of a wealthy family.

Since he had experience with high society, he didn't feel out of place.

Wynn felt out of place, being the only one wearing the knight school uniform.

Of course, the uniform was worn for ceremonial purposes, so it didn't look strange in this place, but he stood out as the only one wearing it.

Unable to just let it be, Locke had arranged for clothes for him, but Wynn refused it, saying that the uniform was fine.

Now, he slightly regretted it.

At the beginning of the banquet, Locke also conversed with nobles he knew, and prominent merchants who were potential trade partners, whom Locke could not ignore, and exchanged greetings with them.

Left alone, Wynn had nobody to talk to.

In the end, there was nothing else Wynn could do other than reach for the food on the table.

However, since it was a banquet, he treated himself to the foods that he normally couldn't eat.

He smacked his lips as he ate.

“Poor peasants also have poor eating manners. Don’t believe that you belong here.”

While he was eating, somebody called out to Wynn, who was gazing at the dressed-up nobles.

“Jade...”

“Outside the school, it’s Lord Cliffdorf to you. Well, since you’re a commoner, I can disregard a little impoliteness.”

Leading his lackeys closer, Jade made a faint smile.

“At any rate, so you also survived, huh.”

“Cockroaches sure are tenacious...”

“If only for their resilience, they deserve some respect.”

They pointed scornful gazes at him.

However, in that place, they were nobles.

Wynn stood upright without moving, and wordlessly received their words.

“The group that caused the coup, were a bunch of plebeian knights like you. Commoners who defend His Highness the Emperor, are a burden.”

“It is as Jade-sama said.”

“As expected, an honourable job like knighthood should be given only to we of high nobility.”

Jade nodded in agreement at his follower’s words.

“That’s right. As Father has advised me, I have reported this to His Highness. Commoners really are just a liability.”

With a smirk, Jade and his lackeys turned their backs on Wynn.

Wynn remained standing upright, looking at their backs.

His face betrayed no emotions, but both his fists were tightly clenched.

Certainly, Instructor Aldo and the others did use violent actions to change the status quo.

However, who was the real cause of the problem?

Despite only foiling the coup d’état, they held this banquet without paying attention at all to the cause.

He understood Aldo’s and Sir Zaunas’s feelings

“Hmm? That’s...”

The departing Jade stopped in his tracks.

Before they knew it, the orchestra had stopped playing, and everybody’s eyes gathered on the entrance.

Wearing a simple, neat dress that was in no way gaudy, a girl had entered the room.

Though she hadn't yet reached maturity, with her blond hair arranged, everybody let out a sigh upon seeing her divine beauty.

The attention everybody paid to their own country's Emperor Alexei, and even Princess Cornelia, paled in comparison to that overwhelming presence.

It was Leticia van Mavis, the Brave.

She had entered with her Father, Duke Mavis, Lady Mavis, and also her siblings.

The whole ducal family moved towards Alexei, and knelt before him.

Among them, only Leticia remained standing, holding her dress in a slight curtsy.

Blessed by Goddess Anastasia, she was above the authority of humanity, and so she need not bow to any king of a country.

"We are extremely sorry for being late. Good day, Your Highness."

"It's a banquet. Don't be so formal, Duke Mavis."

Alexei took Duke Mavis's hand, and helped him up.

"It has been a while, Brave-dono."

"You haven't changed, Your Highness." [8]

Leticia smiled.

Leticia then looked towards Cornelia and greeted her.

Cornelia also returned the greeting.

“This is, His Excellency Duke Mavis, and this is Brave-sama. Welcome to my estate.”

Shamelessly breaking into the conversation between the Emperor, the Ducal House, and the Brave’s conversation without minding the situation, Welt approached with his arms held out wide,

“Thanks to Brave-sama’s efforts, we were able to stop the lowly insurgents’ schemes. Well, we had also raised an army in the defense of His Highness and the capital, but thanks to Brave-sama’s swift action, we were only able to rescue Princess Cornelia. As expected of Brave-sama.”

“It will become another chapter in the legendary history of the Brave, Leticia van Mavis.”

“Apart from being the Brave who slew the Demon Lord, you are now also a patriotic Hero who saved the country.”

The other nobles who were looking on, added words of praise.

Acknowledging their words, Alexei once again turned to Leticia.

“Brave-dono. In appreciation of your deeds, I had wanted to reward you, but you already have status, so We cannot think of anything else we can give you. You have not changed your mind about marrying Prince Alfred, have you?”

“I am pleased that you value me highly, but...”

Leticia softly rejected the offer with a small bow.

Duke Mavis made a slight grimace, while Welt smiled.

If the Crown Prince and the Brave were engaged, then the royalty's influence would expand.

That ran counter to Welt's plans.

In the coup d'état incident, the Cliffdorf faction was able to control the central part of the Knight Order.

The imperial family was also trying to fulfill their duty in this incident, but the nobles of the anti-Cliffdorf faction had lost their influence.

After this, even the Imperial Family and the Duke couldn't easily oppose the power of the Cliffdorfs.

As Welt erased his smirk, Leticia and Alexei continued their conversation.

"Besides, the person who did the most work this time was not me. Somebody else was the one who accomplished the deed."

"Hou... If Brave-dono goes so far to say it like that, then We would like to greet that other person."

"That's right. I believe it is the right time for me to introduce him to Your Highness."

Leticia turned around. walking in front of Alexei.

'Hmm? A more distinguished person? Who is it?'

Welt, who was unable to conceal the smile of having obtained power, felt a tinge of doubt at Leticia's words.

Who was the person who had done more than the Brave, who had defeated Zaunas and stopped the battle between the knight order and the insurgents?

If this went awry, the Cliffdorf faction's influence would be diminished, and an obstacle might appear.

If that happened, then he would need to take measures against that person.[? 1?]

Welt, who trailed behind Leticia and Alexei, was deep in thought.

The nobles stepped aside before Leticia, forming a path.

The nobles who had stepped aside followed the gazes of the Brave and their Emperor.

Among the several ecstatic young nobles, a plain-looking youth wearing a school uniform stood there with a bewildered expression on his face.

Dressed in beautiful garments, Leticia, followed by the Emperor, slowly walked towards Wynn.

'Eh? Eh? What should I do? Should I kneel?'

He had seen Leticia when she entered the hall, but his childhood friend was instantly surrounded by nobles.

It felt like she and the Emperor with whom she talked were a world apart from him, the commoner.

Recently, he had avoided doing more than greet her, but he could not even approach her during this banquet setting.

The people around them, their gazes moved to the place the Emperor and the Brave were headed towards, but instantly, the crowd broke into a commotion as the people who were in their way moved aside, exposing Wynn, and also

Jade and his lackeys, who were standing in front of him.

Leticia was leading the Emperor in this direction.

‘What should I do!?’

He reflexively cried out.

Going with the flow, Wynn probably should also step aside.

However, since he was originally at the edge of the room, there was nothing behind him other than the wall.

Leticia and His Highness shouldn’t have any business with a wall, and moreover, Leticia’s gaze was fixed straight at himself.

Locke, who he usually relied on for times like this, was not anywhere near him.

Wynn nervously looked backwards, and saw Jade and the others kneel down gracefully.

Flustered by their actions, Wynn also knelt down.

His heart beat furiously.

His face, on the other hand, grew pale as the blood drained from his face.

The Emperor, who held rights from the heavens, was approaching.

His whole body trembled.

He couldn’t bring himself to look forwards.

Apart from the Emperor, eminent nobles followed behind him.

Wynn heard the conversations of those nobles.

“Oh, is the distinguished person Brave-sama referred to my son, Jade? That is

so. He has saved the Princess from the hands of those traitors.”

“So it’s Marquis Cliffdorf’s son. I have heard that he saved Our daughter, so We were also planning on giving him Our gratitude.”

Wynn could only tell from the presences he felt, but Leticia’s feet have stopped.

In front of her was Jade, who had knelt down.

“Jade. This Brave Mavis-sama. You should greet her.”

“It is nice to meet you. I am called Jade van Cliffdorf. It is an honour to attend the same school as you.”

“Nice to meet you too, Mister Cliffdorf.”

“It may be my parental bias speaking, but my ingenious son, upon hearing of the plot, immediately moved to rescue the princess. As a father, I am proud to have a son like that.”

“I hope that we will treat each other kindly from now on, Brave-sama.”

Until then, Jade had only looked upon Leticia from afar, but he became breathless at the beauty drawing near.

Though she was only fourteen, it was unimaginable how beautiful she would grow to become.[9]

Her slender, graceful body was covered by a simple dress. It was hard to believe that her body possessed the power to overwhelm a whole army.

Jade was exhilarated.

He was able to become her acquaintance. After growing closer, he would obtain her.[10]

Jade showed a tender smile, and looked up at Leticia.

However—

“Likewise. However, Lord Cliffdorf, would you mind getting out of the way?”

Leticia smiled for an instant at Jade, then instantly removed him from her sight.

That gaze was pointed at—

“... Brave-sama?”

Welt spoke out, bewildered.

The distinguished person she wanted to introduce was not his son?

Welt looked again at Leticia.

Flustered, Jade and his lackeys hurried to make way.

As the Brave and the Emperor walk on, the crowd who had held their breath broke into a commotion.

Leticia slowly walked forward towards a kneeling youth— and stopped in front of Wynn, then gently took his hand.

—“Who is that? Who’s he?”

—“That is the Knight School uniform. One of the survivors?”

—“However, it seems that he is not an aristocrat. Is he a commoner?”

Dubious voices were heard.

“Please stand up.”

At Leticia’s urging, Wynn stood.

The blood had completely drained from his face, and he looked pale.

Besides Leticia, who was standing in front of him, he was also unable to face Alexei, and could only let his gaze wander around.

As if dealing the finishing blow to the panicking Wynn, the whole hall was in an uproar.

Leticia had, without minding the wrinkling of her dress, knelt down.

The Brave, who was called “The existence closest to god,” did not bow to the head of a country, nor to a priest representing god.

That Brave had bowed down towards a commoner student.

Alexei, Duke Mavis, and Welt widened their eyes, speechless.

Jade also stared, dumbfounded.

The Brave had ignored him, and knelt respectfully before the commoner whom he so despised.

He couldn’t believe it.

‘What is happening? What kind of person is that commoner!?’

“Kukuku...”[11]

A small laugh broke out behind him.

Turning around, he saw Locke Marine, who was close to that commoner, standing there.

“Jade, the commoner whom you look down on is ‘The Master of the Brave,’ Wynn Byrd. ”

Locke whispered to Jade, and then chuckled.

‘The Master of the Brave... is it? That lowly commoner? That failure of a student?’

Before Jade’s eyes, was a commoner with a pathetic expression, on the verge of tears, unable to follow the course of events, scanning the surroundings.

That man showing a pathetic sight is—

While Jade’s thoughts halted from the disbelief, Leticia slowly looked up at Wynn.

The commotion gradually quieted, silence covered the hall, and only Leticia’s voice was heard.

“During this incident, due to the strength lent to me by my Master, I thank you as a student. My blade and journey was guided by you, Master. From now on, please guide this unworthy disciple.”

“Uh, no, umm...”

Unable to react to the circumstances, Wynn could only stammer, while Leticia looked up at him, smiling.

And then, Leticia turned around while kneeling.

“Your Highness. This esteemed person is my Master, Wynn Byrd.”

“.. This young man is?”

“During the incident, Master was the one who quickly disrupted the magic device at the fort, saving me from my predicament. He is the distinguished person who has done the most in this matter.”

“So that’s it. If that’s the case, We would like to offer you Our gratitude. Thank you. So this is the Master that the Brave who slew the Demon Lord respects. What do you desire?”

Wynn was even more flustered by Alexei’s words. Reflexively. he once again scanned his surroundings searching for a way to escape.

Then, he met the gazes of Cornelia, who was standing behind the Emperor, and Locke, who stood among the crowd surrounding Jade.

Cornelia smiled, and nodded once.

Locke held his thumb up, grinning widely.[12]

Wynn soon calmed down.

In the blink of an eye[13], his face became filled with closing a firm resolution completely unlike his previous expression, and looked straight at Alexei.

“If I may be so presumptuous, towards Your Highness. In this incident, Sir Zaunas and the others anguished over the trajectory of this empire. In their anguish, the reason for their actions are unclear, so please investigate the cause of the incident.”

He spoke.

Though he was a commoner, as a Knight Cadet, he spoke without regarding social status.

He began to regret it.

“H-, h-, how rude of a statement!”

Red-faced, Welt raised his voice.

“How outrageous, for a mere commoner! Your Highness! Those words from one of low birth—”

“Are you insulting my Master?”

Interrupting Welt, who had begun to advise Alexei, Leticia stood up and

glared at Welt.

Welt, overwhelmed by the glint in her eyes, stepped back.

“Your Highness. As Master said, the root of this problem is deep. We should make it clear who bears responsibility for this with a thorough investigation.”

Welt felt Leticia’s withering gaze.

Everybody was overwhelmed by the presence she emitted.

Even Alexei was overwhelmed.

“Br-, so Brave-dono agrees with your Master’s words.”

“Also, Sir Marquis, you should not have done that, the mood is now ruined. Please, let the feast continue, everybody.”[?2?]

At Leticia’s words, the hall awkwardly returned to a buzz.

The orchestra also began to play some slow music.

Welt was still dumbfounded, but eventually scurried away.

He was probably formulating a plan for the future.

Sending him off with a pointed glare, Leticia turned back to Wynn.

“Thanks for your hard work, Onii-chan.”

“Leti... Y-, you wha...”

At Wynn’s weak protest, Leticia stuck her tongue out with an impish smile.

“For you to lead His Highness, and that those remarks just now. I thought my heart stopped.”

“It was revenge, Onii-chan. Haven’t you been avoiding me recently?”

“No... that’s... well, Leti is the Brave, and a Duke’s daughter, while I was a commoner.”

“Mou, It’s fine not to mind such things right?”

Locke wove through the crowd and approached.

“You now know that you have the title ‘The Master of the Brave.’ Why should you be so reserved? ”

“That’s right.”

Cornelia also called out from behind her father, Alexei, and walked towards Wynn.

“Wynn, Locke, It’s good that you’re alright.”`

“Your Highness...”

“Stop with the ‘Your Highness.’ Call me Cornelia.”

Cornelia smiled wryly at Wynn and Locke, who were about to kneel.

“What, you can’t believe I am the princess?!”

“Well, I thought you were the daughter of some noble, but I didn’t think you could be the Princess. Why are you at the Knight School?”

“I’ll tell you about that another day. Right now is Brave Mavis’s turn. Thanks to you, I was saved. I truly thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“No, I was just doing what I wanted to do.”

Leticia smiled at Cornelia.

“We really stand out... I’m just an extra here.”

The Master of the Brave was also on good terms with the princess.

It wasn’t like the intense attention from before, but everybody’s gazes were collected there.

Before they knew it, Leticia had taken Wynn’s arm, and approached the food table.

Locke smiled wryly, seeing the commotion erupt once again, as the Brave fed Wynn the dishes.

Casually, he spoke to Cornelia next to him.

Though she had a pleasant smile on her face, if one looked closer, envy could be seen in her gaze.

‘I see, there will be big trouble later on, my friend.’

Locke let out a small sigh.

Before, when Wynn’s name was revealed, not many people were present.

Being highly classified information, the existence of the Master of the Brave was merely a rumor in the public.

But now, in front of a crowd, Leticia, the Brave, had personally bowed to Wynn, announcing his existence as the Master.

From then on, his surroundings would become noisy.

He had much influence — through the Brave— and they would definitely approach.

How much hardship will the yet naive Wynn face as he advances down his path?

‘The person himself just wants to become a knight.’

But from now in, everybody would see him as “The Master of the Brave.”

To his friends, and other people, how will his power help them?[?3?]

Then. as he walks on, what can we expect from in the future?

‘Either way, it will be interesting!’

Leticia led Wynn around, as the bewildered crowd gradually looked on with pleasant smiles, while thinking of the enjoyable future ahead.

Locke would be able to see it from up close.

The story of a failure of a knight cadet who walks on as “The Master of the Brave”